

“Latinos = X Factor” with EquisLabs’ Stephanie Valencia.mp3

Steve Phillips [00:00:10] Welcome to Democracy in Color with Steve Phillips, a color conscious podcast about politics. I'm your host, Steve Phillips. And in 2008, shortly after Obama was elected president, I was at a conference where I talked to two of Obama's top staffers, and I raised to them that I thought that one of the biggest contradictions in politics was the size and importance of the Latino community on the one hand, and the lack of investment from progressives in the Latino community on the other. One of the Obama staffers got very defensive and tried to eEquisplain what they had been doing, etc.. The other had the sophistication and maturity to agree and to say that that was something we had to focus on. I maintain that that remains one of the central contradictions in this country. Certainly on the progressive side where we're going and you hear a lot in political commentary and articles and in the media about Latinos and where their allegiances are. And this is a cause of concern. But I would say you still see very little investment and action in that regard. And so this remains a very compelling and pressing challenge, particularly heading the 2024 election, but really for the next several years, if not several decades in this country, as the last we're going to talk about today, we're joined by one of the key architects of building Latino political and community power within this country, someone who's been really at the epicenter of a lot of these efforts for a number of years and is doing very exciting work on multiple fronts. And so I'm very excited for this conversation. And joining me for this conversation, as always, is my co-host, Sharline Chang. Hi, Sharline. We're recording on Halloween, although when this episode airs, it will have been a couple of days ago, but I assume you guys will have had big Halloween plans. And then do you want to introduce our guest.

Sharline Chiang [00:01:48] We definitely have awesome Halloween plans. It's that time of the year. Yeah, we're really looking forward to basically Halloween that we call it. I call it the whole week. You know, we're just going to celebrate the whole week. And I'm really excited to welcome our guests today. Our guest today is Stephanie Valencia. Stephanie is a national leader at the nexus of politics, technology and leadership development. She's the co-founder of Equis, an organization that invests in leaders and ideas to create a more powerful Latino electorate. Equis, by the way, as I've been told, is how the letter X is pronounced in Spanish. And that's partly why Equis Labs, which is about EQUIS Labs, is a play on kind of words and sounds. Maybe. Stephanie I'll explain more later. I thought that was really neat. Stephanie was part of a small group of advisors who served President Obama in senior roles throughout his presidential campaigns and both terms. Among her roles, she served as an aide to the president at the White House Office of Public Engagement and as deputy Latino vote director on the 2008 Obama campaign. In addition to all that, she's the coauthor of West Winger's Stories from the Dream Chasers, Change Makers and Hope Creators Inside the Obama White House. And she is co-host of the podcast Finding 46 about the road to the White House in 2020. Welcome, Stephanie.

Stephanie Valencia [00:03:09] Thank you for having me.

Steve Phillips [00:03:11] Thanks so much for being here. Stephanie, I want to share also with the listeners that is, you're in New Mexico now and you're from Mexico originally. That's right.

Stephanie Valencia [00:03:19] So I'm from New Mexico now and just moved back about two years ago after being away for almost 20 years.

Steve Phillips [00:03:27] And so it's really one of these fascinating behind the scenes things about national politics and these these insider groupings. And so for good and not as for a long time, the national politics really at the Senate level, there's been kind of what some people call this Montana mafia. And so you had Senator Jon Tester and then the staffers who had worked with him were in these very key positions around Democratic national politics, but one that is not that representative of state. So I would say it was a challenge. But there's also kind of this New Mexico border a few people don't really actually know about. So Ben Ray Lujan, who was the head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee number of years, he was from New Mexico. He had a whole team of people. And then now here we have Stephanie, who's going to also continue to work from that from that face. So we're just really glad that we can both reconnect.

Stephanie Valencia [00:04:18] Well, funny story about Ben Ray and I as Ben, Ray and I really grew up together, really in politics. His dad was the speaker of the House in New Mexico for many, many years and obviously followed in his father's footsteps in statewide office. But we literally were teenagers together. So the fact that he is a United States senator, you know, we're obviously still very close friends, really kind of like family. And it's just funny to now see him as United States senator when we've seen each other as teenagers and grown up with teenage since teenagers together. So anyway, but there is a definitely a mafia here. And both that have focused on New Mexico politics and New Mexico has been a real interesting place in that, you know, New Mexico was the original bellwether before the rest of the West became blue. I'm just giving my quick pitch on New Mexico and its importance because. You know, as it's maintained its blueness. It has also kind of been taken for granted because everybody just so Mexico's fine now. The truth is, I think kind of in both ways, like it kind of led the pack for becoming a blue state. It's also just like a very interesting canary in the coal mine about what's happening in the West, because a lot of like what happens here happens before it happens in states like Arizona and Nevada. And so it's just interesting to kind of be back home and have a pulse for things like where are our Hispanic men trending or where is this kind of sense around gun safety or the pandemic and small business stuff? It percolates in a very different way here. That I think is kind of indicative for how the rest of the West ends up going.

Steve Phillips [00:05:56] So I wanted to have you share a little bit about your your background and journey. And so I think that, you know, that's why, you know, sure to people over the years, I mean, I've been blessed to move in multiple circles, in multiple settings, and I've been in different donor circles and different political circles. I mentioned in your business meeting those Obama staffers. But what's been interesting, the feels like not exactly the Forrest Gump thing, but you've kind of been in each of these places with terms of like you were, you know, those of the Obama piece. And then there was the kind of the Silicon Valley tech, you know, grouping that was going on. You were kind of it were there. And then also the current work. So can you just share with folks how you kind of get involved in politics in the first place? And then how did you end up in the Obama administration?

Stephanie Valencia [00:06:39] Yeah, well, [00:06:40] it's a funny story because I did grow up, you know, several hours south of here, close to the US-Mexico border. And long story short, I grew up in a community that looked for people that looked just like me. If you're from New Mexico, like everybody is Hispanic, basically. And so it wasn't until I really went to college on the East Coast and in Boston, where I realized like I was different. And when I realized I was not one of many but one of a few, and that was a real eye opening experience. And then I went to the Latino student group in at my university, and they

weren't eating beans and tortillas. They were eating plantains and black beans. And they were mostly Caribbean Latinos. And I didn't realize I was part of a bigger family. It's really where I established and identify there and kind of tapped into my Latino identity, my Latino identity. I lived in Central America and Mexico City for a little while while I was in college as well, and then kind of realized I was part of an even bigger community. And where I grew up in New Mexico, I'm a 13th generation New Mexican. My family traces their roots back to the Apaches, who were defending their land here alongside Geronimo, to the Spaniards who came to this and conquered this area. So New Mexico is a is a has a very complicated history of which almost every New Mexican, if they're honest about their history, has a mixed right of of who they are. And so I didn't my family did not immigrate to this country. [86.6s] [00:08:07] There's a saying here in New Mexico, we don't cross the border. The border crossed us and just by the grace of God, we ended up on this side of the border. [7.8s] And literally within ten miles of where I grew up was where the Gadsden Purchase was signed. That established the US-Mexico boundary and the purchase of the West. Right? So literally where I grew up and where I spent most of my life was part of that story. So again, [00:08:33] I just was kind of radicalized in college and came into my identity in that way. And when I graduated, I and this gets into how I got into the Obama world. It was 2004 and I had an opportunity to a fellowship program in D.C. that allowed me to pick any organization in D.C. and I had an option to go work in the United States Senate for Hillary Clinton at the Steering and Outreach Committee in the Senate, or go work at the Washington office on Latin America. [26.1s] And all I wanted to do at that time was to go evangelize about the US Latin America relationship and the disparity that existed in that relationship. But the Washington office on Latin America never called me back. So I ended up in this career in politics by it being my fall back, working for Senator Clinton at the time, who a senator from New York and ultimately, you know, worked for her for a little over a year and spent more time in the House, in the Senate as a political staffer and a press secretary. And it was in 2007 and late 2007 that I had an opportunity to take a job with either the Obamas or the Clintons. And a lot of her team thought I was going to go work for them because I had worked for her previously. [00:09:43] But something about President Obama really tapped my soul. And so I made a very tough choice and ended up working for President Obama and worked for him on the 2008 campaign as deputy Latino vote director and went from there to the transition team and the transition team to the White House, where I led a lot of the Latino engagement, worked a lot on issues like the housing crisis, but also on immigration. And spent most of my twenties and half of my thirties in the White House and in the administration. I ended up working for the Secretary of Commerce and getting a very different point of view of working in government around the world, advocating for U.S. companies around the world. And then I went and worked at Google, and from my time at Google, this was the time when big tech was still exciting and new and interesting. And ultimately, you know, that translated. Then Donald Trump was elected president and I was like, I can't be in a company right now. Google, in my view at that time was kind of shifting gears to really try to align with Trump. They knew Trump was skeptical of them, and so he they were trying very hard to be a company that he could work with, and I just could not stand to be in an environment like that, especially when my community was under attack. That was when we were being called rapists and murderers and he was trying to rescind DACA and all of these things like the world really felt on fire to the people who I had been working with and alongside for the previous ten years. And so I stepped out and in 2018 went in and advised a number of people who were in Silicon Valley, as you mentioned, Steve. [101.9s] And, you know, it was very interesting because obviously everybody was engaged in politics in 2018 after 2016, and there was a huge push. And the thing that was really apparent to me was it had been ten years since the Obama campaign and here Latinos were still not a part of the conversation. In these rooms of, you know, lots of resources moving around, you know, Latinos and the same

tactics were being used. There wasn't like a lot of new research or understanding about Latinos. We were very much still in the same place we had been ten years prior. And so when 2018 was over and that election cycle had completed, had the opportunity to stay in the role that I was in. But I also really felt called to start something that was filling a gap that I had continued to see over time, which was this gap around a deeper understanding of Latinos in this country, new and innovative ways to reach and engage them, and continuing to build a leadership bench that would carry it forward. [00:12:24] Because we're at a moment in time where coming back, Sharline, to what you said at the top, where Latinos are really the X factor, that's why we named ourselves selves Equis is because Latinos are the X factor in politics and society in this country. Moving forward. There is no denying that Latinos are changing the face of this country. How they relate to their identity, their sense of belonging in this country will really matter to how they participate in politics, how they participate in civic society, how they participate culturally and economically in this country. It's not just a conversation about voting for us that's very important. Like our job, it says not to make Latinos Democratic robots our job at Equis is to help create a better understanding of who Latinos are and help to create conditions so that we can shift the notion of our own sense of belonging in this country. And we believe that if we are able to shift that notion of identity and belonging, Latinos are going to show up and vote. Latinos are going to show up at their school board meeting, Latinos are going to show up and, you know, economically in this country and they will be a force to be reckoned with and people will feel accountable to this community, for which I would argue we have been invisible. And no politician, no president has felt accountable to this community and we want to shift that stuff. [80.2s]

Sharline Chiang [00:13:45] I'm so glad you were talking about the gap and how I think you start. You basically touch upon how you came to co-found Equis Labs. So I guess giving it a listener some context. You founded Equis Lab in 2019 and has to shed light on the complexities of the Latino community as it was growing. So can you tell us more about Equis Lab? What does it do? What's its mission? And what I know you said that the goal is not to make them what did you call it? Democratic robots. But, you know, came coming from the democratic sphere and being progressive. What was the impetus and your own inspiration in those who, you know, were to to build Equis lab? What did you feel that was missing from the progressive ecosystem and the landscape that led you to create Equis Labs?

Stephanie Valencia [00:14:33] Well, the primary thing I think we felt was missing was really in-depth research and not just what we would see as like, here's a poll here, here's a poll there. [00:14:42] There was no real longitudinal or in-depth place beyond Pew, Pew Hispanic, which has always been the kind of cornerstone research hub of research looking at the Latino community. And ultimately, we wanted to create a place that also had a political lens. Pew was not political at all, so we wanted to create more of a political lens and also more like a societal lens. So again, we don't do political research, polling and analysis. We've done some very interesting projects for, you know, entertainment and cultural focused research projects to try to understand. Does a movie that centers a Puerto Rican cast are going to resonate with Mexican-Americans that are two thirds of the Latino community in the United States, like trying to understand where people are relating to their identity, not just as it relates to politics and who they're voting for, but also like their choices around entertainment and seeing themselves on the screen. So again, creating that depth and longitudinal sense. I would argue that now we have probably one of the biggest resources who Latino voters are in this country since basically, you know, 2019, which obviously we plan to do this for a long time. So we continue to aggregate that data. But the more polling and research that we do around this community, the more

dimensional understanding we have about them and can see trends over time. The other big piece is around experimentation and innovation. So looking at things like how do we use WhatsApp as an organizing tool for campaigns and candidates, but also for companies who are trying to reach Latinos. WhatsApp is ubiquitous among Latinos, immigrants and nonimmigrant, Latinos alike. You know, we all use WhatsApp, and WhatsApp is this place that has become, you know, thought of as like the wild, wild West for disinformation. But a lot of really great information gets shared via WhatsApp. Like Bad Bunny, his last album release he did via WhatsApp. So you've got like a sense of like how people are connecting in without going and creating a new app or a new thing to try to build community around. Go to the places where people already are. The other one in addition to that is YouTube. And YouTube is another platform that Latinos are consuming news and information on YouTube as a primary source of news and information than the general population is, which means that in addition to watching CNN, they're probably going to watch a YouTube video from a random influencer who may or may not actually be a journalist and getting more information on topics like inflation or the supply chain or what's happening in Ukraine or what's happening in Israel, like what is happening in the world and trying to understand their place in it. Latinos are consuming lots of kind of information in these places. And yet the tactics we were seeing from people who are trying to reach and engage and understand Latinos were very static, like they were still trying to just reach people on radio and television. And those are still fine mediums, but like ignoring these other places or just focusing on advertising on those places aren't going to help people actually resonate or reach or persuade Latinos. [190.5s] And the last picture is around leadership and bench building and making sure that the people who are in positions of authority and power for strategy and resource allocation are equipped with the research and the tactics to spend it wisely and to invest wisely. And to think kind of about this longer term trajectory of what we're actually trying to do, which I'll wrap up by saying that I think both parties have let our community down. I think Republicans have vilified our community and played games with the issue of immigration, have pretended to be serious actors on the issue of immigration and have really played rope a dope with the community and with Democrats on it. I think Democrats have failed the community and using very lackluster approaches to an investment to reaching the community and very late investment and also have not prioritized immigration. There's a lot on the issue of immigration that, you know, and Latinos occupy the very diverse spectrum of immigration. We have to be very honest about that, which is you have Latinos who are for greater border security and you have Latinos who are for more progressive legalization programs. And there are things that kind of unite both of those, which is, you know, streamlining and certainty and process and security. [00:19:16] But at the end of the day, like both parties have, in my view, let down our community. And so I do think that, you know, our job or what we view part of our job is to ensure that we are creating a set of resources and research and tactics that will help people be smarter about it. [16.8s]

Steve Phillips [00:19:33] I just want to the listeners lift up a couple of things that you had said to put more of an exclamation point on. I think the very important to understand the contemporary politics. And so even you're talking about your own bio and your journey and your family and how your your family never moved. And that's it's interesting because I do and I've tried to focus on how the if this continues to raise the border, you know, we didn't cross the border. The border crossed. There's a lot of ways it's metaphorical to a certain extent, like a rallying cry, but I don't think I've ever actually met anybody who it's actually literally true for, right? In that you can actually say so that. It's a whole different frame on this whole understanding immigration in terms of going back where you came from, in terms of who had people coming over the border. So I just want to really emphasize that in terms of the importance of that framework, because really understanding the nature of

ultimately this question of whose country, you know is this, who belongs in and who doesn't. And then the other piece is a piece about the importance around research and analysis within progressive politics and progressive social change overall, and is frankly been shocking to me how little that major spending decisions are driven by data and analysis and research and information. Right. And actually, my father in law sent this email back in 2004 when they were first starting the big political money spending pieces they were coming to him for and that the Americans coming together would spent like 100 plus million dollars. And he said an email saying, Are we really going to spend \$100 million without a plan? Right. And so the lack of information, research and data, and then we've tried to lean into that on the Democracy in color side, and I've done it myself. Right. So then in 2018, So my favorite story of 2018 is that there was a couple of major donors wanted to move, money flipped the house, went to the main superPAC for the House House Majority PAC we had suggested because then on goes California. Well before redistricting, it was David Halliday, his district. There'd been a close race. There's a lot of the majority Latino district. And it's like if you boost Latino turnout, we can actually have an impact. There was California vote two thirds Democratic House majority PAC said. There are a lot of Latinos in that district and they don't vote in midterms. So that's probably not a good district for us to focus on. And our polling shows that it's not promising. And I was like, it's two thirds Latino. Who are you polling is the first issue? And then we pushed back and we got them to move money to communities, renew California, set roots in the United Farm Workers movement, and they had 30,000 phone calls, door knocks, contacted people, won that seat by 800 votes. That's like one of my favorite stories of 2018. But it shows the lack of data that undergirds these major, major decisions around how lots of money gets spent. So in terms of you guys leaning into the data and research and analysis, what are you concluding that progressives are getting right and wrong about how to engage with and think about Latino voters?

Stephanie Valencia [00:22:29] I'll say a couple of things. [00:22:31] I think the first is progressives have gotten away for too long, and we're starting to see a shift in this thinking latinos in a binary, which is you're either GOTV target or you are persuasion target. And it's actually kind of a lot more complicated than that. Latinos are there, you know, there's a range, right? There's a universe of Latinos that are very strong Democrats that like no matter what are. And the challenge with that group in many ways is that your persuasion isn't persuading them to be on your side for persuading them their vote matters enough that they're, we like to say, persuading them off the couch, like getting them out the door to go and vote like you're that's actually the persuasion is that it's worth their time. It's worth the effort for them to go and vote. And then there's this like, persuasion universe that isn't like your typical, like persuasion universe in the same way you might think about non-Hispanic white voters. And this is like what we call kind of conflicted voters. These are people who are I really like Democrats, but like the economy's really doing well. And Trump did really well with the stock market in my and my for Kay was doing really well under Trump. And he's a really strong leader. So like this, like on an issue or two, like they are if it's like this, the societal conditions are such that they feel like there is cover to vote for a Republican, like they will do it. And that is where like we call this like the conflicted voter. [89.0s] They're like, yeah, Republicans just like aren't great or they're kind of extremist, but like the economy, you know, So that's like the place where narratives around like the economy and Democrats kind of reframing themselves and repositioning themselves, you know, really matters as Steve, as you just said, like allocation of resources around a campaign are determined by data polling and voter data. [00:24:26] And one of our big projects that we took on in the last couple of years was really looking at the voter files and trying to understand like how race models were built, how people were being identified and targeted as Hispanic and Asian as black, and trying to

just like really trying to sharpen some of these voter models. What I will say is last year and some of that work that our team was doing with one of the major data vendors in the space is we uncovered and discovered 2 million untagged Latino voters nationally, which when you think about that and 4 million voters of color, more, more know voters of color broadly, 2 million Latinos. Typically that's huge because those are 2 million people for which campaigns were not taking into account them in a universe. [50.1s] [00:25:17] And the truth of the matter is about Latinos, because we are a younger electorate. Our population growth is being driven by people who are actually being born here in the United States, not by people who are coming. Huge misconception about exactly about how population growth is happening. We're younger electorate. We just are. And so the more we ignore and try to ignore opportunities to engage new people into the electorate, the more we're shooting ourselves in the foot. [30.2s] [00:25:48] Because if you don't have an 18 year old or even a 25 year old has the opportunity to vote and they've never voted. And we're not talking to them because we don't. We only talk to the people who turn out every election. You're just talking to an older and older share of the electorate rather than people who are casting a wider net. And then once you cast that wider net, being smart enough to understand who are those people that need the kind of persuasion to just get them out the door to go vote because you know they're going to vote for your person? And then where are the people that like me, that kind of that conflicted voter that needs more of like a traditional kind of persuasion approach, even though that persuasion approach might be more nuanced. Right, in terms of like the issues that they care about. So I just that I think is kind of what we have to like research and dimensionality that has been missing. There's this just like people want things in campaigns, black and white, right? Like, who do I talk to? We might not talk to Who are my people who are not my people? And the truth is, it really takes a lot longer. [62.6s] Lasting, I'll say, is like one of the things, Steve, that we've learned and a huge learning for me is like out of 2018, there was a lot of conversation of like, how do we optimize relational organizing, How do you optimize relationships? And I think like the thing we've all learned around COVID and like now being in remote work is you can't like, yes, you can use WhatsApp to reach the masses to communicate kind of broad messages. And as my WhatsApp notification goes off and you also have to be thinking about the one on one relation and also how like outside of a geo TV cycle, how people's views and values are being shaped by platforms like YouTube where they're consuming news every single day about what's happening in the world. And you have entities like Prager U who are out there talking about lots of different approaches to different issues. They're talking about immigration, they're talking about abortion. And this is all being done from a nonprofit kind of C3 perspective because they're talking about issues. There's no political advocacy that's happening year round and it's shaping people's views and values year round. So we think about engagement of these communities in a strictly kind of like geo TV cycle sometimes or in the context of an election when the truth is like people's views and values are being shaped in lots of different places. Three 6524 seven Yeah, yeah.

Steve Phillips [00:28:19] I want to ask, turn a little bit to the Latino Media network piece, right? And so it's been very to me, it's one of the more exciting and promising developments on the progressive landscape overall. I mean, I've been I've been part of these conversations about progressive infrastructure for really almost 20 years now. And what was it, real networks that people who are old enough remember that Rob Glaser started before there was even that was like the early video of like the early 2000 that can be on the Internet. And then should there be, you know, progressive TV stations, Al Gore bought Current TV. We didn't really use it as a progressive vehicle. I remember being part of the early days of Air America Radio and that there was discussion is, you know, donor circles around investing in creating Air America Radio, which did kind of was the platform

for Rachel Maddow to become more of a national figure. But you guys have done something quite revolutionary, if my analysis and understanding are right so you and Media Network co-founder Jess Morales. Ricardo, you bought 18 Spanish speaking radio stations across the country for \$60 million and launched a new Latino media company. So it's one of, if not probably the largest acquisitions of radio stations by a Latino owned and operated company. So can you talk about that, the decision to do that as a focus? And then what you guys are with the goals and the plans and the vision is for Latino Media Network.

Stephanie Valencia [00:29:40] I think a lot of people are familiar with the same culture, eats politics for breakfast or something along those lines. And the truth is, is that when we think about the impact of, you know, how we can actually reach and engage Latinos in a real way, you know, the real way is like like I said, going to the places where people already are. YouTube, radio, WhatsApp, radio is another medium that. While terrestrial radio. [00:30:09]Everybody's like, Why are you guys buying radio? Isn't radio on the decline? Yes, for mainstream radio, terrestrial radio, radio stations is on the decline among Spanish language radio and like listeners and consumers. It is steady, if not increasing. So long as people are coming to this country. They are looking for community when they get here and they're looking for that community and they often find that community on their local Spanish language radio station. And so again, if our goal here is to shift our notion, our community's notion about our own sense of influence, identity and belonging, which we believe will shift other behaviors beyond that radio as a way to do that. Mass communication is a way to do that without having to go build something new. [47.9s] I think, Steve, like one of the challenges around some of those previous efforts was that they were trying to build something new and very specifically around a progressive brand and progressive label. And part of what we're trying to center here is Letty being Latino first, and that we are trying to inform and inspire our community with the stuff that they're looking for. Music and other informational programming around issues they care about, whether that be health care or what's happening in their community locally. A lot of what has happened with these stations over time. Has Univision, Televisa maybe shown now technically not a Hispanic owned company, just so that we're clear? And part of why this is the biggest like we're one if not the.

Sharline Chiang [00:31:42] Really.

Stephanie Valencia [00:31:43] Biggest. Yeah, just like small note here.

Sharline Chiang [00:31:47] I didn't know that.

Stephanie Valencia [00:31:47] You know, [00:31:47]it started as a Hispanic owned company many, many decades ago, but is now owned by a private equity fund in New York City. You have Telemundo, which is also seen as the largest Latino serving media brand owned by NBC. You. So we are probably given our footprint one of the largest, if not the largest Hispanic and not only Hispanic, Latina owned and operated media companies. Our C-suite is almost entirely Latina operated. Our CEO is Latina. Our co-founders, two co-founders myself and Jess are Latina and our chief revenue officer is also Latina. So we are really trying to build a company that reflects our values in that regard. But again, all that is to say we want to be the place and we're starting with radio. We will be a multiplatform audio company providing news and information and content, current events, content, music to this community and giving them what they want and being a place for them both locally and nationally. You know, eventually we will. We're starting with these ten markets, 18 radios, 17 radio stations and 18 in ten markets spanning from the Central

Valley of California in Fresno to Los Angeles to Las Vegas and McAllen, Miami, Chicago. One of the things I'm most excited about in some ways about these stations is in McAllen and Fresno and Las Vegas. You know, we have some of the best performing stations in those markets on FM with a mix of F.M. and AM radio stations, is improving our musical formats and giving people what they want to listen to, whether it's regional Mexican or reggaeton and like know more of a pop focus Paso plume, bad bunny to the regional musical acts of like McAllen, Texas, here in New Mexico. [111.5s] There's very specific New Mexico regional music that like I would be playing if I owned a station here to Miami, where it's a very Cuban-American centered station that centered around the Cuban exile community, you know, in the sixties and seventies. And it's been around that long. Radio mundi [00:33:59] So, you know, our goal is, again, to make sure we kind of get back to the local roots of these communities for which we serve and train. [6.8s] [00:34:06] We're giving people news and information that they need locally and again, providing information and inspired content that's going to help people and help our community navigate what's happening in the world and their place in it and inspire and inform so that we can shift our own sense of influence, identity, and belonging. [19.3s]

Sharline Chiang [00:34:26] So incredible just taking that all in. And I'm just reminded again of the breadth and depth and diversity of the population that we term the Latino population. It's just so, so rich and diverse. I want to ask you a quick question, and if you don't have these numbers handy, just we can just skip it. But my mind during this conversation has been trying to remember because between the two books that I've helped Steve and I know those figures we have in the books that are research, but remind me again what percentage of the population more or less is percentagewise Latino?

Stephanie Valencia [00:35:01] Roughly 20% of the U.S. population.

Sharline Chiang [00:35:05] That's an incredible I think just people just tend to forget that it's a such.

Stephanie Valencia [00:35:09] And that's a rapidly rapid percentage, right? Totally. Well, it's rapidly rising because Latinos, when you look at who's driving population growth in this country and ultimately who's driving growth in the electorate, it is Hispanics in this country. And when you look at Latinos relationship to politics, I would say that, you know, you've got like this population that is the swingy-est driving growth of population in the electorate. We are the swingy-est, part of the electorate. If you look from 2016 to 2020, there was some steadiness you in 2022 and there's like a red wave that didn't really happen in 2022. And then you have half of Latinos, 50% of Latinos are opting out of participating from politics and elections every election cycle. When you have black voters turning out 60 to 65%, white voters turning 72, 70%. Right. So. So, you know, obviously, the more rapidly Latinos are growing and the more assured the electorate is, the more physical number of your number of Latinos you need to vote to change that 50% number. It's not like that number is static, but it's so it's a huge and tall order to think about what is it actually going to take in order to shift that 50% number by a margin or one, two, three, four or 5%? It's going to take a lot.

Steve Phillips [00:36:30] Yeah, I want to.

Sharline Chiang [00:36:31] But the payoff is big.

Steve Phillips [00:36:33] Ask a quick questions. We're getting towards the end of the time. But you talked about the changing media landscape that exists out here. And so it's a

fascinating thing from a progressive standpoint said, I've been part of all these different things, people talking about this, which you look at this platform or that platform, it's not irrelevant to me that you have people from legacy media like Trevor Noah and Rachel Maddow leaving those perches to do these other pieces. So I'm curious how you guys look at these other media platforms. You've mentioned YouTube a number of times. Are you thinking about trying to be involved in those spaces as well with the media work you're doing?

Stephanie Valencia [00:37:09] Yeah, I think there's a natural crossover from a lot of the audio content. As we're on a podcast that is recording video, you see people like Joe Rogan, who you know has been, regardless of how you feel about the content and substance of his podcast, like early on, Joe Rogan was a pioneer in podcasting and YouTube being like he had his Spotify podcast and a Spotify deal, and he also had YouTube as another platform to ten X his reach, right? And there was a kind of slightly different audience who may be the system on Spotify versus the people who listen to him on YouTube. So people who are thinking about YouTube as like an audio brand as well. Like how many times do you put a YouTube video on in the background and just listen to it like audio a lot of people do in addition to kind of more produce content. So there's, I think just a lot of opportunity, especially in the audio space, to think about that crossover to podcasting, from radio to podcasting, podcasting to YouTube. And then also kind of looking at what conservatives have built around YouTube and Prager U as a place for developing more video based content. Educational content on issues is something that I think progressives have been pretty far behind on.

Sharline Chiang [00:38:28] And Stephanie, it's just been so great to talk to you today and we can't wait to continue to keep up with your work. You know, amazing work. And speaking of your work, where can people keep up with your work?

Stephanie Valencia [00:38:40] Yeah, we are. Excuse us. And Equis spelled E-Q-U-I-S, I guess is our website. All of our research and other reports and findings can be found. There were similarly navigating the transition on social media that many others. I still have not filed suit against whatever Elon Musk's new thing is called, which has a very similar brand to ours. So there might be a trademark fight we might have at some point. And, you know, we're similarly navigating what social spaces we're going to be occupying, given kind of everything that's happening with whatever it's called X, which happens to be our name in English.

Steve Phillips [00:39:18] Think long and hard before going through gating and litigation route. The richest man in the world.

Stephanie Valencia [00:39:23] Man. I'm totally, totally kidding about that, but getting about it. But the thought did cross my mind at some point.

Steve Phillips [00:39:30] Might be good branding, good media play. So we needed to wrap up some ideas. Well, thank you for joining us safely, but also for the work that you guys are doing because you hear I mean, this obviously a lot of terrible news in the world today and a lot of reasons for people's concern and pessimism. But I really believe that, you know, what you and your work has been as a leader in what you guys are doing. And this is really what among the more inspiring and hopeful pieces of work. So I just want to thank you for that. And I just want to thank you for joining us.

Stephanie Valencia [00:40:01] Thank you, Sharline. And thank you, Steve. I appreciate that so much.

Steve Phillips [00:40:04] All right. That's all the time we have for today. Thank you for listening to. Democracy in color was the Phillips. Please help us get the word out about this podcast by subscribing wherever you get your podcasts, sharing with your friends, tweeting at Democracy Color, and add SteveP tweets and finally said Democracy in Color on Facebook or Instagram. You can also keep up with all things Demco by subscribing to our newsletter at Democracy in Color dot com. If you listen to our podcast on iTunes, please leave us a rating and a comment that helps others find our show. This podcast is a democracy and color production our producer is Olivia Parker. Follow on Today is our staff writer and associate producer Sharline Chiang as our editor and co-host. Special thanks to April Elkjer for quality Check, recorded virtually with the assistance of the podcast studio San Francisco. Until next time, keep the faith.