

Headline: “They Have Coconut Memes:” Harris-Walz Campaign Takes on Social Media

Deck: Youth engagement is high priority as Americans are accessing the DNC in all new ways.

Story:

When he opens his Instagram, 19-year-old political science student RJ Doroshewitz clicks through his stories and sees reposts. Not of cat videos or pop culture news, but of Kamala HQ, an official social media account for Kamala Harris’ presidential campaign.

The account posts videos of Harris and her running mate Minnesota Governor Tim Walz to popular audios and trends.

This pop culture appeal can be found throughout the Harris-Walz campaign, as 200 content creators were invited to cover the Democratic National Convention.

In an August 13 press release, DNCC Executive Director Alex Hornbrook said that “the convention team set out with an ambitious goal of reaching more Americans than ever before.”

And reach more Americans they did. In an August 21 press release, ahead of the convention’s third night, it was announced that the events of night two were viewed by over 81 million people.

The means to accomplish this goal? Changing with the times. On the [DNC official website](#), it is explained that “as Americans continue to consume information and content in new and changing ways, the convention team is committed to offering a dynamic, inclusive experience that will reach Americans within and beyond the United Center.”

This updated formatting included live updates from the 200 credentialed creators- whose digital content reached over 85 million views during the first two convention days according to the August 21 press release- as well as vertical streams of the events on TikTok, Instagram, and Youtube.

25 year-old Jessica Siles is Deputy Press Secretary of Voters of Tomorrow, an organization that works to engage Gen Z in political elections. To her, the use of social media represents a new way to engage “meeting [young people] where they’re at.”

And where they’re at is on their phones. In a fall 2023 [study](#), change research found that 38% of voters between the ages of 18 and 35 spend three to five hours a day online.

The study also found that 84% of those young voters highly value candidates and elected officials who actively engage with them.

This surge of youth engagement, according to 29-year-old Colorado delegate Kenny Nguyen, is essential, as it gets those in power to focus on “our issues.”

“I grew up with Columbine,” Nguyen said. I grew up with Boulder, there’s a lot of mass shootings in Colorado and I want to talk about my issues.”

Dorshewitz feels these youth-oriented issues aren’t being given the attention they deserve, and believes that the cause is low voter turnout among younger demographics. “If I was a politician and I had to take a look at that and run the numbers and I had to pick which group to pander to, I’d pick the old people too,” he said.