

NO KINGS IV: Kaylee Peterson

I want you to imagine someone for a moment:

Imagine the Idaho parents trying to afford rent, gas to work, and halloween costumes. Imagine the Idaho farmer who won't make enough from his crop to cover diesel costs, equipment repairs, or seed prices. Imagine the Idaho students who know they can't afford the college degree they've dreamed of their entire lives, who worry more about the next climate disaster than they do the fact they'll never afford their own home.

Imagine the people in our communities who have stopped believing that anyone in government is listening, that their vote counts for anything.

Not because they don't care, but because they've cared for so long with so little change that they question whether their voice matters.

There are moments in the life of a nation, where we as a people must pause, look beyond the arguments of the day, beyond the candidates and campaigns, beyond party politics and the things that divide us, and ask ourselves a more fundamental question.

What kind of people do we intend to be?

Not what kind of government we want. Not which party should hold power. Not even what we hope to gain for ourselves.

But what do we owe one another?

What do we owe the generations who came before us, who struggled and sacrificed to pave the way of progress? What do we owe the children who will inherit it? And what do we owe the promise, written into the very founding of this nation, that the future of a free nation should be determined by the people themselves?

These are not questions reserved for presidents, senators, representatives or the men and women who hold public office.

These questions belong to every citizen.

For too long we have watched politics become something that happens somewhere else, something decided by somebody far away or something bought by those who can afford to purchase the good will of our government.

As we approach November 3rd, I believe we must begin asking ourselves these questions again.

Because our democracy is not simply a system of government, it is a statement of faith. Faith that ordinary people, given a voice, a choice, can govern themselves. Faith that our differences do not make us enemies, faith that the course of our nation need not be determined by the wealth of a few, the power of the well connected, or the ambitions of those who would lead us, but by the collective judgement and experience of ordinary people.

It is an extraordinary idea... and yet the failures of an apathetic system have convinced us that our vote is not worth the time or hassle.

How many of us have grown weary of the news, of our politics, of the parties? How many working people finish a long day, return home to their families and wonder how they can possibly find the time or the energy to participate in a system that has so little time for them?

I have met these people. I have driven 117,000 miles to hear their stories, their fears, their dreams and hopes for the future.

I have seen the impossible become real. I have watched exhaustion become enthusiasm, I have seen strangers become friends.

When I started this movement five years ago, I was introduced to communities weighed down by fear, fear of speaking up, fear of repercussions, fear that no matter how hard they tried, they would be left behind by a system that hadn't worked for them in decades.

Something incredible happened, one became two, then ten, then fifty, then rooms filled with people instilled with a new hope.

You are not alone.

Your voice has not been forgotten or left behind.

You hold tremendous power to shape the kind of nation you want to live in, that you want to leave your children and your children's children.

Never underestimate the power you hold, the power of a single social media post, text message, phone call, postcard, or event invite to connect a weary mother, worker, student, or neighbor to the extraordinary power of their voice, their vote. The extraordinary power of community.

In 2022, I was that weary Idaho mother with two small children. I would drop my daughter off at school and see four separate QAnon bumper stickers. I truly felt like there was no one within a twenty mile radius of me who felt the way I felt, who worried about the future of our nation the way I worried.

Then one day I saw a local facebook post, searching for anyone, anyone that would be willing to put their name on the ballot, even if just as a placeholder. Feeling brave, I responded... and that single facebook post has grown into a 117,000 mile campaign across rural Idaho, not just a campaign, but a movement that has grown to include tens of thousands of people, just like you...

How many people do you think you can reach in 17 days?

Idaho elections have been won or lost by 2 votes. 6 votes. 207 votes.

How many people can you reach in 17 days?

There are 124,000 unaffiliated voters in the 1st District.

How many people can you reach in 17 days?

There are over 200,000 unregistered eligible voters in District 1.

How many people can you reach in 17 days?

When you refuse to surrender to cynicism, when you CHOOSE to believe that our institutions can be made accountable, our communities more united, and our future more just, you are taking part in a work that began long before any of us were born and will continue long after we are gone.

That is the work of democracy.

It is an unfinished work, and it belongs to us.

United, let us take back our nation November 3rd.