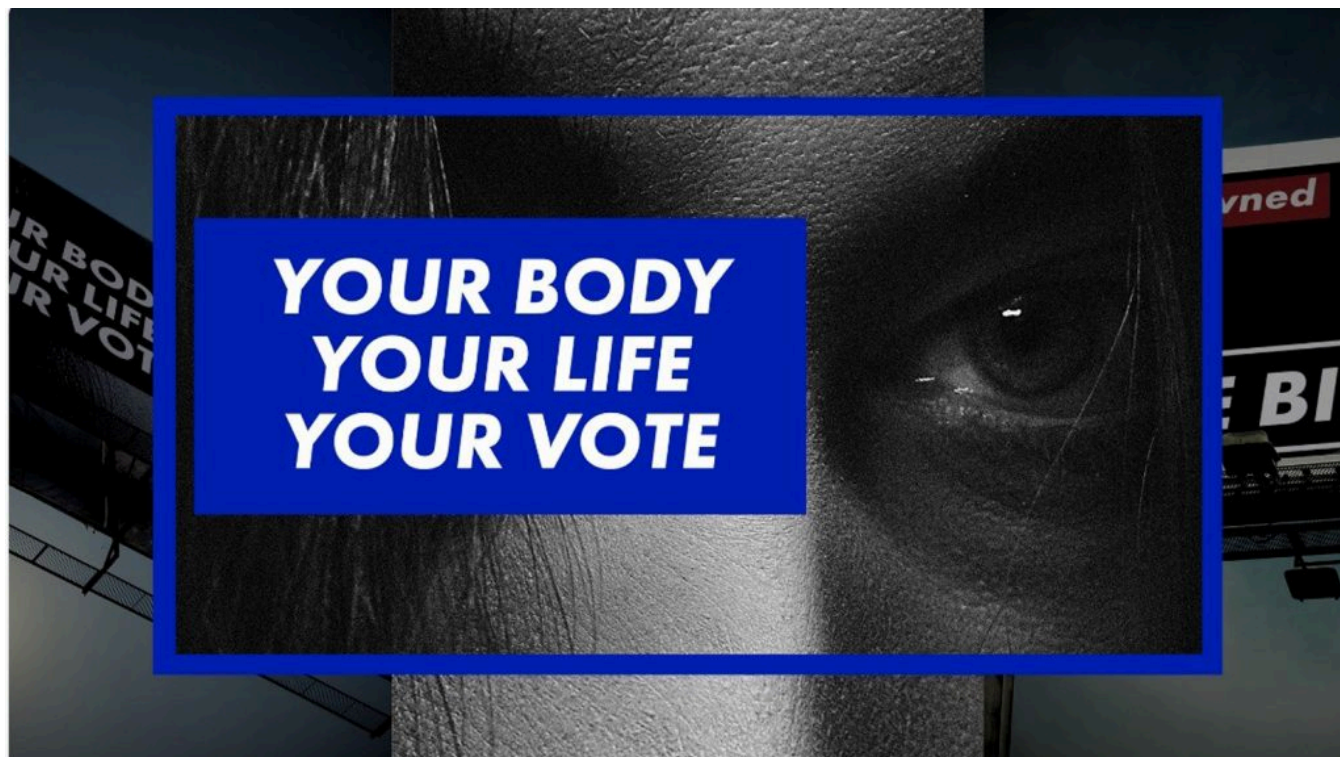




People For's 'Artists for Democracy' Urge YOU to Vote!

by **Reese Alexander**

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For the last two months, FF2 has been proudly spotlighting the work up People for the American Way (aka People For), a nationally known progressive advocacy group founded by legendary TV producer Norman Lear of “All In The Family” fame. In the run up to election day, their ‘Artists for Democracy’ campaign has utilized the voices of artists across the country to encourage all Americans to get out and vote on – or before – November 5th.

Throughout September, I had the honor of interviewing three amazing women artists who are partnering with the campaign: Beverly McIver, Deborah Kass, and Victoria Cassinova. In my conversations with these women, I came to learn not only more about their work, but the drive which connects them all—a drive to unite the country, and to save America!

Recently, I had the opportunity to learn more about ‘Artists for Democracy’ from Rio Tazewell (People For’s Director of Campaigns). We spoke about People For’s mission, their ties to the arts, and the significance of women artists’ voices.

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“Art has been a part of the People For strategy for creating cultural and political change from the very beginning,” Rio told me. “It was founded by Norman Lear, who is an icon of the art and entertainment world. In 2020, with the ‘Enough of Trump’ campaign is when we decided to build an electoral campaign around the art. Given the unique situation the country was in at that time, we felt this was something we had to do to mobilize the arts community we were connected to. Art is such a powerful communicator, and can reach people in a way that conventional messaging really can’t.”

Many of the artists taking part in ‘Artists for Democracy’ began their partnership with People For in 2020’s ‘Enough of Trump’ campaign. This includes Deborah Kass and Beverly McIver, who both described the experience to me as a powerful moment in their careers. “I made several paintings, and it was just amazing,” Beverly explained in her interview. “The paintings became billboards, and they were also printed as posters. So many people saw them. States that were ‘purple’ actually voted blue that year. I thought, ‘Oh my God, art has power.’”

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Though ‘Enough of Trump’ in 2020 was, by all accounts, a smashing success, People For decided to take this year’s campaign in a new direction. “We felt, for a number of reasons, that the word ‘enough’ was not the right buzzword anymore,” Rio explained. “We landed on ‘Artists for Democracy’ because that is essentially what this election is about. We are working to defend our democracy itself, and its fundamental freedoms. We gave artists a lot of free rein in how they wanted to talk about that in their art, and we’ve got an incredible array of pieces this time around.”



The pieces by Deborah, Victoria, and Beverly’ – along with all the work of the entire ‘Artists for Democracy’ team – are certainly passionate. Victoria’s portrait, ‘Kamala Harris: Freedom’, showcases the Vice President locked in her signature joyful, forward-looking gaze. Beverly’s ‘VOTE Black Beauty’ presents a softer, gentler, yet equally powerful look into feminine beauty and autonomy. In contrast, Deborah’s ‘Your Body, Your Life, Your Vote’ does not celebrate, but burns with a strong, uncomplicated rage.

“Spotlighting women artists has been a major priority and focus,” Rio explained. “Especially this year, given the overturning of Roe and the rights of women across the country being severely undermined. It speaks to the need for those issues to be even more front and center this election cycle.”

The work of each artist speaks for itself. This is not political art as seen at a gallery. No glass nor years of progress separate the viewer from these images. They are relevant to the current time because they are the current time. Through their pieces, these women do not merely ask you to view, but to act! These artists want you to vote, and, through voting, to save the rights of women and every other disenfranchised group in the United States whose future hangs in the balance this election season.

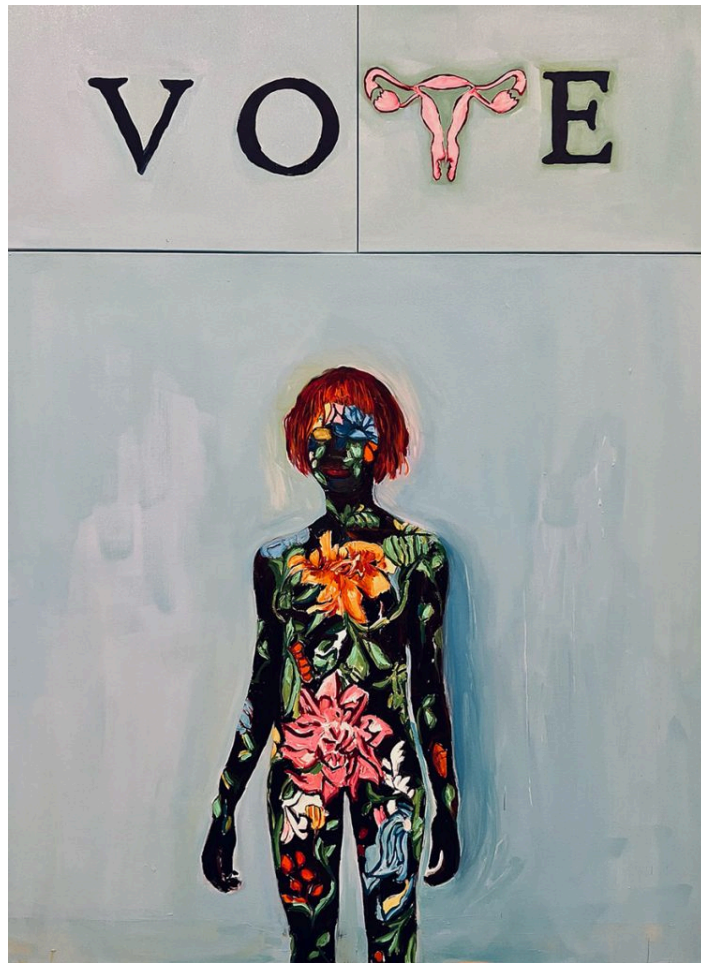
‘Artists for Democracy’ implores you to participate in our democracy, lest there is no democracy to participate in the next time around. With their unique talents, these artists seek to save our democracy. But they cannot do it alone. We must stand, united, with them.

Though our own coverage of ‘Artists for Democracy’ has come to an end, the campaign’s work is far from over. To any readers in swing states: keep an eye out this week on your way to work. In the coming days, People For will be putting up billboards across battleground states in a final push before November 5th.

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When I asked Rio about the impact ‘Artists for Democracy’ has had this election season, he looked towards the future instead of the past. “Hopefully, in this last week, we’re going to see the biggest impact from the campaign.”

Though election day is fast approaching, there is still time to register to vote! We at FF2, along with People For and all of their ‘Artists for Democracy’, ask you to get out and vote this November.



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Featured Image: “Your Vote” by Deborah Kass

Middle Image: “Freedom” by Victoria Cassinova

Bottom Image: “Vote” by Beverly McIver.

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We are deeply grateful to People For for finding us, reaching out to us, and collaborating closely with us to create this 5-part series.

REMEMBER: STRONGER TOGETHER!

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