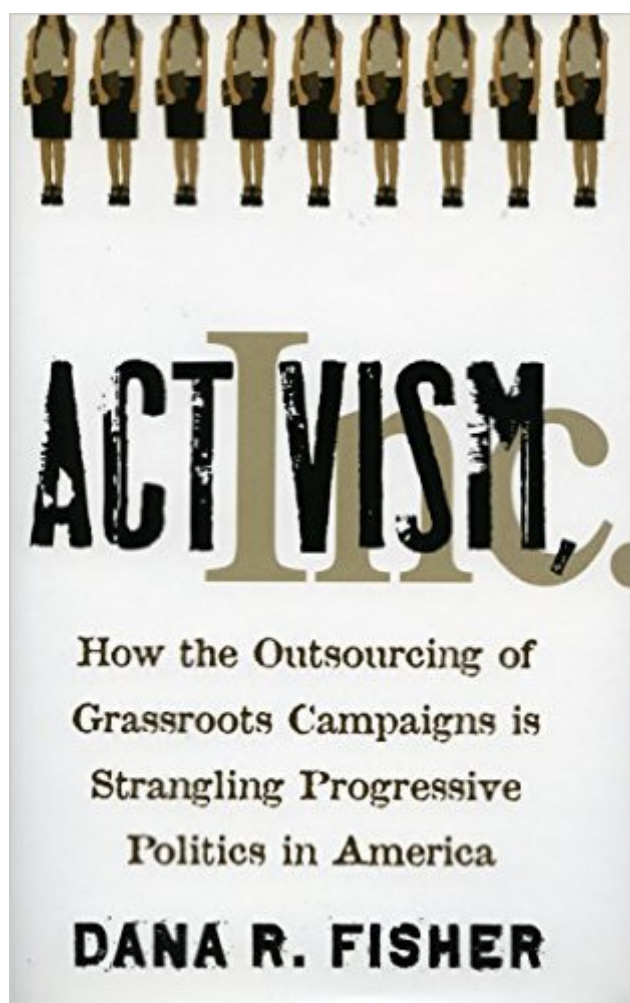


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# Activism, Inc.: How The Outsourcing Of Grassroots Campaigns Is Strangling Progressive Politics In America



## Synopsis

Activism, Inc. introduces America to an increasingly familiar political actor: the canvasser. She's the twenty-something with the clipboard, stopping you on the street or knocking on your door, the foot soldier of political campaigns. Granted unprecedented access to the "People's Project," an unknown yet influential organization driving left-leaning grassroots politics, Dana Fisher tells the true story of outsourcing politics in America. Like the major corporations that outsourced their customer service to companies abroad, the grassroots campaigns of national progressive movements—including Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Save the Children, and the Human Rights Campaign—have been outsourced at different times to this single organization. During the 2004 presidential campaign, the Democratic Party followed a similar outsourcing model for their canvassing. Fisher examines the history and rationale behind political outsourcing on the Left, weaving together frank interviews with canvassers, high-ranking political officials across the political spectrum, and People's Project management. She compares all of this to the grassroots efforts on the Right, which remain firmly grounded in communities and local politics. This book offers a chilling review of the consequences of political outsourcing. Connecting local people on the streets throughout America to the national organizations and political campaigns that make up progressive politics, it shows what happens to the passionate young activists outsourced to the clients of Activism, Inc.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a description of a research project undertaken to determine if the use of canvassers is

hurting the ability of progressive politics to keep young people engaged and that it actually blocks entry into beginning jobs at progressive political organizations and non-profits. Much of the book is devoted to describing canvassing and contains material from a number of interviews she conducted with canvassers in 2003 and 2004. My daughter took a position as a canvasser for one summer, and much as the author described in the book, the ads for the job were highly misleading and the work it entailed had little to do with helping with environmental campaigns, unless you consider raising money as an effective tool for fixing environmental issues. As a major in Environmental Science with a minor in Public Policy, my daughter thought she would be working on a campaign to help clean up the plastic patch in the Pacific Ocean, not standing on a street corner begging people to give money so that lobbyists could be paid. The author presents a somewhat rosy picture of the canvass. In fact, my daughter worked for 10 to 12 hours a day (no overtime) standing in front of stores and at college campuses describing the campaign and trying to get people to give her cash, or better yet, from the organizations perspective, a monthly pledge on their credit card. She wasn't bothered by the long hours or the rejection, but was bothered by the pay system and by a lack of knowledge of the area by her "directors". Because they were new to the area, as they were moved frequently around the country, they had little clue as to where to find places to solicit that would not be repetitive.

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