Emily: Hi, my name is Emily Ladau,

and I'm a Rooted in Rights storyteller.

Emily drives her wheelchair in front of the U.S. Capitol.

This election, disability rights activists

are working hard to bring

disability issues into the spotlight.

Our position is simple.

Disability rights are human rights,

and since according to the U.S. Census Bureau,

nearly one in five Americans have a disability,

we want both campaigns and the public to take notice.

And it seems the candidates are taking notice,

thanks to strong advocacy initiatives,

like the non-partisan #CripTheVote,

a campaign to bring disability rights issues

into the spotlight this election.

But the question is, are people

recognizing disability as a key election issue

in an exploitative way or a substantive way?

Take for example the issue

of Donald Trump mocking the disabled reporter.

A clip of Donald Trump from CNN.

Donald: And now, the poor guy, you gotta see this guy.

Ahh, I don't know what I said,

ah, I don't remember!

Emily.

Emily: That incident brought disability

some of the most attention

that it's received this entire election,

and that should be a good thing, right?

Well, it wasn't necessarily the kind of attention

that disability advocates are hoping to receive.

Donald Trump's rebuttal to the issue

made out disabled people to be a charity case.

His response: "Who would do that to [the] handicapped?

I've spent lots of money making buildings accessible."

Well, let me tell you, Donald Trump.

There's more to disability rights

than making buildings accessible.

And then there's Grace.

A clip from "Grace", a political ad from Priorities USA Action: a pro-Clinton SuperPAC.

Emily.

This ad features parents of a young girl with spina bifida

talking about Donald Trump's mocking behavior

and how much it shocked them.

Lauren: The children at Grace's school

all know never to mock her,

and so for an adult

to mock someone with a disability

is shocking.

Emily.

Emily: And sure, it's never okay

to mock someone with a disability,

but, is it okay to use someone with a disability

to tug at the heartstrings of voters?

And where was the voice of someone

who has a disability?

Then there's Dante.

Another political ad from Priorities USA Action featuring a seventeen year old boy.

Dante: When I was one year old, I was diagnosed

with a rare form of cancer on my spinal cord.

But I spend my whole life fighting back.

Dante watches the clip of Donald Trump on TV.

Emily.

Emily: This ad features a disabled person

expressing their disgust at Donald Trump

mocking people with disabilities,

and this is exactly how it should be,

a disabled person speaking up for themselves.

But again, the problem is:

Where is the discussion about actual policy issues?

And why is disability being used

to tug at voters' heartstrings?

A clip of Dante showing his tattooed forearms that when together read, "CANCER SURVIVOR".

Grace sits in her wheelchair, arms raised and smiling.

Grace in her wheelchair holding hands with another young girl wearing roller skates.

There's a big difference between

using disability to play a voter's emotions

and talking about the very real concerns

and experiences that people with disabilities

face every single day.

So it's time for the candidates to go deeper,

much deeper.

I'm talking about employment opportunities,

affordable and accessible housing,

healthcare and insurance coverage,

social security,

inclusive education,

the list goes on and on.

It's time to recognize,

no matter what your political views are,

that the disability community,

which makes up the world's largest,

most diverse minority,

and one fifth of the population of America,

has a right to representation in this election.

Written and directed by Emily Ladau.

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