In the wake of disappointing voter turnout in recent U.S. elections, some Latin American observers have pointed to a missed opportunity for the Democratic Party. They argue that Democrats could take a page from the playbook of Mexico’s ruling Morena party, which has successfully combined economic populism with transformative messaging to retain and even expand its political power.

Earlier this year, Morena, led by President Claudia Sheinbaum, defied the global trend of incumbents losing ground. Despite challenges, including significant security concerns, Morena secured not only the presidency but also a larger congressional majority. How? By delivering clear, bold economic policies aimed at lifting up the country’s poorest citizens. The party dramatically raised Mexico’s minimum wage and communicated its vision of economic justice with relentless clarity.

In contrast, U.S. Democrats seem to have struggled with voter enthusiasm, even with a strong economic record. They’ve passed significant legislation, including measures to reduce drug prices and historic investments in infrastructure and climate action. Yet, many voters remain disconnected from these achievements. Mexican writer and communications consultant Alberto Lujambio points to a critical difference: “The Democrats didn’t come out to vote because there is not a populist and transformative political project” within the party.

The Democrats’ challenge is not merely one of policy but of perception and communication. Morena’s approach wasn’t just about passing economic reforms—it was about tying those reforms to a larger narrative of transformation. They made their policies personal and tangible, ensuring voters saw their lives improving in real terms. This was coupled with an uncompromising message: economic justice for the many, not the few.

In the U.S., despite clear wins for working families, Democrats often fail to present a cohesive vision that feels revolutionary or urgent. Incremental improvements are lost in a fog of technocratic language and drowned out by the noise of political polarization. This leaves voters disillusioned and disengaged.

The lesson from Morena is clear: transformative politics requires more than good governance; it demands a movement. Democrats must find ways to inspire and

mobilize their base with bold proposals that directly address the economic anxieties of working Americans. This could mean aggressive action on issues like healthcare affordability, labor rights, and wealth inequality—all underpinned by a narrative that makes the stakes and solutions crystal clear.

As Democrats look ahead to 2024, they should consider whether they want to be a party of cautious progress or one of transformative change. The path to sustained political power may well depend on their ability to embrace the latter—and in doing so, give voters a reason to believe not just in policies, but in a vision for a better, fairer America.