*The Media Consortium is a network of 80 independent news outlets. Our mission is to support and grown the impact of the independent news sector.*

Dear Friends,

After years of tracking money in politics, Big Oil’s pushback against climate change, anti-immigrant xenophobia, and the increasing anxiety of America’s workforce, the news outlets of the Media Consortium expected that 2016 would pull the curtain back on anti-progressive forces in the United States.

We set out in February of 2016 as a Consortium focused especially on supporting immigrants and immigration with powerful personal storytelling. That effort because Who Counts, a project centering immigrant voices.

We also supported member reporting on climate change. Media Consortium outlets Truthout and Democracy Now! broke the story of Standing Rock. They, along with Yes! Magazine and the Laura Flanders show, among others, spent weeks at the encampment, partnering with indigenous journalists to explain the devastation a pipeline could wreak to the water supply for the local population.

Most of all, however, we began getting ready for a longer fight. We committed to building a racially equitable independent news sector that will partner with and engage communities rather than report about them. We began to make our virtual peer-to-peer network real by building a cloud database to connect all our members. We began a new communications strategy to support the independent media in building up its brand and reach. And we increased our outreach to other news media associations, partnering with IRE on a media policy workshop and contributing to AAN and ACM strategic planning.

Unfortunately, our guess that the future would grow darker was right. But we are now well positioned to shed light into those dark places.

Sincerely,

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

Executive Director, The Media Consortium

**#Who Counts: A Reporting Project on Immigrant Voter Rights**

On July 25, the Media Consortium launched Who Counts, a project centering immigrant voices on voting rights. The project was designed to harness the transformative power of journalism to tell stories by the people most directly impacted by the political debate on immigration. Our aim was to support reporters in answering these vital questions:

* Who counts as an American?
* Whose vote counts?
* Who is doing the counting?

The project began with telephone briefings aimed at providing reporters sources and information for stories on immigrant voting rights. Once the reporters had received this initial education, the project created three events that put journalists from independent media in direct conversation with immigrant advocates, local leaders in voting access and racial justice, and the media that serve immigrant communities:

* **WhoCounts Chicago** (October 5) featured representatives from Change Illinois, Chicago Votes, Just Democracy Coalition, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and Coalition for a Better Chines American Community in conversation with journalists from In These Times, The Chicago Reporter, WVON, Gozamos, Vocalo, Radio L’Union, Contexture Media and Public Narrative.
* **WhoCounts New York** (October 8) featured representatives from the New York Immigrant Coalition in conversation with reporters from Feet in 2 Worlds.
* **WhoCounts North Carolina** (October 14) featured a conversation between experts from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, the Insitute for Southern Studies, NALEO and the South East Asian Coalition, filmed by the People’s Channel of Durham and replayed by Media Consortium members.

**Impact**

The stories created by TMC outlets on immigrant voting rights have been captured on our WhoCounts tumblr, <http://whocounts.tumblr.com/>with over 20 stories per month in September and October.

*Bringing together journalists and diverse community-based organizations is important in and of itself. A couple of comments from speakers have influenced how we are reporting two upcoming stories – one on new voter laws, the other on English-language programs in public schools.—*Susan Smith Richardson, The Chicago Reporter

*The NYC Who Counts event supported our reporting by connecting our editorial staff to people from immigrant activism, journalism and music who offered fresh perspectives and storylines for the stories they were in the process of reporting on about millennial immigrants and the 2016 election—*John Rudolph, Feetin2Worlds

**Standing Rock: Media Consortium Outlets at their Best**

**Media Policy at IRE 2016**

The Media Consortium has a long-standing interest in a set of media policies that make the internet open, accessible and affordable; that promote media diversity; and that preserve Bill of Rights freedoms, including freedom from unwarranted searches via surveillance.

Most years, we create a set of phone briefings for a small group of Media Consortium reporters. This year, in keeping with our larger strategic goal of building the infrastructure of the entire sector, we brought those briefings to IRE. Through the generous support of the Media Democracy Fund, we were able to bring in 15 journalists to IRE, including 9 journalists from community media who had not previously attended that conference.

Impact

Our sessions on the digital divide was especially well-attended, both by our journalists and those at IRE. IRE invited us to return in 2017 to put on another set of panels.

*The panel on the digital divide made me consider how much more emphasis is placed on honing the skills and tools that go into producing investigative work than on improving the means by which we disseminate it.* –Rebecca Burns, In These Times

*Attending the IRE conference for the first time proved to be rewarding. There were a number of facets of Investigative Reporting that I learned, and other areas that I brushed up on. The Media Consortium's sessions on Media Policy were particularly helpful and interesting as it's a huge issue that we don't tend to discuss in everyday life despite the ways it affects society*. –Sylvia Harvey

*The session on Black Lives Matter surveillance renewed my interest in an investigation I am pursuing into police social media monitoring, particularly at protests, using new geotracking tools that can harvest social media posts in particular locations.* –Aaron Cantu (ironically Aaron was arrested in February 2016 for covering a police protest)

**TMCinColor: Towards a Racially Equitable News Sector**

A look at the Media Consortium’s joint conference with the Association for Alternative Newsmedia in 2015 made clear that our sector had far to go on racial equity. The journalists attending our conferences in 2015 and earlier did not represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States. With important exceptions, our outlets struggled to catch up in the early days of Black Lives Matter. And the need was real, as the newspapers and radio programs that had once served these communities were diminished by the same market forces that crippled mainstream media.

In response, the Media Consortium created the TMCinColor program. The brainchild of Manolia Charlotin, now Associate Director, TMCinColor as three parts:

Budget

Looking Forward

Supporters