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Who Counts? A Reporting Project by The Media Consortium

The Media Consortium, a network of 80 independent media outlets has launched ***Who Counts?*** – a project that centers the voices of marginalized immigrant communities who seek the same rights as all other U.S. citizens. The project will focus on these fundamental questions:

- Who counts as an American?
- Whose vote counts?
- And just as important, *Who* is doing the counting?

While the dominant media narrative has amplified the voices that inflame nativism and racism during this charged election season, independent media is harnessing the transformative power of journalism to tell stories by the people most directly impacted by the political debate on immigration. By centering the voices of new Americans, we aim to shift the conversation towards communities seeking to fully participate in U.S. political life.

Who Counts as an American Voter?

As part of this project, The Media Consortium (TMC) will hold a series of community events that put journalists from our network in conversation with immigrant advocates, local leaders in voting access and racial justice, and the media that serve immigrant communities.

This fall we will host a two-part Chicago media convening with our members, *In These Times*, *Chicago Reporter*, and *Truthout*, to bring together immigrant advocates and service providers with diverse media that serve the South Asian, East Asian, Latino, African and Caribbean communities. After a spring ***On the Table*** gathering in Pilsen convened by Ra Joy of CHANGE Illinois, TMC connected with several community media organizations to assess how a collaborative effort can work to bring information to diverse immigrant communities. Too often, these disparate stakeholders don't have the opportunity to be in dialogue and learn from each other.

Project Goal: The goal of this effort is to establish qualitative relationships between independent media with national reach, and local ethnic media, to produce stories that have a comprehensive approach to informing immigrant voters about the 2016 election and beyond.

Part I

In September we will host a tele-briefing with our independent media members, ethnic media, immigrant and voting rights advocates. The aim of this briefing is to center the voices of immigrant media partners to help us frame the program for the October media gathering. The experts invited to this briefing will support ethnic media in tackling stories on election access, voting guidelines,



comprehensive immigration reform, and the economy. We have found these types of tele-briefings to be effective in building relationships among journalists and between journalists and experts.

INVITED MEDIA PARTNERS

Muslim Observer

Hi India

Desi Talk Chicago

Gozamos

Hoy

Telemundo Chicago

Nueva Semana

WVON

Chicago Defender

Chicago Crusader

Radio La Difference

CAN TV

Vocalo

WHPK (Caribbean radio programs)

South Shore Currant

Part II

During the first week in October, we will host a community media gathering at the *In These Times* offices that builds on the September tele-briefing. After a panel discussion between ethnic media, independent journalists, immigrant advocates and voting rights experts, we will move to a series of breakout conversations powered by open space technology. Once again, the aim of this gathering is to center the voices of community media journalists and to connect them with independent journalists and immigrant advocates.



Program Goal: Our goal for this convening is to develop a strategic framework and editorial plan for an election story series with community and independent media outlets.

Key Partners

In These Times

Chicago Reporter

Truthout

CHANGE Illinois

Chicago Votes

Just Democracy Coalition

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Illinois Campaign for Political Reform

Protecting Democratic Rights

Voter Rights bills being passed across the country are making voting harder for immigrants. Even in states like Illinois that have not passed such bills, naturalized citizens can face a significant number of hurdles preventing them from voting. That is one reason the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights has launched "We Are Illinois," a non-partisan voter registration and mobilization campaign that seeks to fully integrate the immigrant community into this country's democratic process. As AlterNet recently reported (<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/blow-voting-rights-illinois>), Illinois could do better by setting up automatic voter registration, which Gov Rauner just vetoed.

Impact: Immigrant advocates including Change Illinois, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and Asian Americans Advancing Justice have told the Media Consortium that they would like to present their research to community media. For example, ICPR would like to inform media about their Illinois Voter Project. Our tele-briefing and event will give advocates the chance to do this. The outcome will be stories in community media encouraging immigrants to vote, and giving them solutions to register and ensure their vote is counted. We will measure that impact by collecting the stories on voting rights published by community and local media.