Immigrant Voter Suppression: A #TMCinColor Collaboration

The 2016 election cycle has been driven by an intense fear of immigrants. This fear has materialized in calls to build a wall on the US-Mexican border; in campaign commitments to disallow Muslims from immigrating; and via executive actions targeted at deporting undocumented immigrants. While these sentiments are not at all new in American culture, we have not seen them expressed in such an overt way since the red scare of the 1950s.

To make a real difference in how immigrants are perceived, the Media Consortium proposes a set of news stories focused on immigrant voter and citizen suppression. Against the prevailing narrative that immigrants are parasites on US society, our journalists will foreground the attempts by immigrants to become citizens and to vote—to participate fully in our society. We will investigate the manifold barriers immigrants find to citizenship and voting, from laws designed to exclude immigrants to laws intended to set up barriers to practices (such as inaccessible voting booths) that set up de facto barriers.

These news stories highlighting immigrant citizen and voter suppression will be produced by the 80 independent news outlets of the Media Consortium. Organized to support and grow the impact of the independent news sector, the Media Consortium has a ten year history of bringing news outlets together to collaborate and co-promote stories on critical issues, from reproductive health to climate change. At the organizations annual meeting in February 2016, members overwhelmingly approved a focus on immigration for 2016-2017.

Over the next 9 months, from June 1, 2016 to February 1, 2017, the Media Consortium will birth over 50 stories focused on immigrant voter and citizen suppression. These stories will share the same hashtag, and will be available to the public via the [#TMCinColor page](http://www.tmcincolor.org/) we currently host on our website. In keeping with our commitment to racial equity, we will work with our outlets to ensure that reporters are drawn from and engage with immigrant communities. We are also working closely with the Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) and other immigrant-focused NGOs.

Our director for this project is Manolia Charlotin, herself the child of Haitian immigrants. With additional funding we would be able to create briefings for our journalists, and assist them in developing rich data visualizations and other content to help them tell their stories.

Our goal in these stories is to change how Americans think about immigrants. We have been experimenting with a tool that can measure this kind of change. Created by Prof. Gary King at Harvard, it’s an algorithm that provides sentiment analysis. With some additional funding, we could apply that tool to this project.

We’d be delighted to talk with you further about how you can support this project.

I had this paragraph in as the second paragraph, but then decided that it was off topic:

Journalists have a responsibility in times like these to counter irrational fear with education. The fact (embraced by economists on the left, center and right) is that immigrants of all types bring economic benefits to the United States. [[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2) There are other benefits to citizenship as well, from gaining powerful allies against homegrown terrorism[[3]](#footnote-3) to increasing the diversity of American culture, which itself can lead to innovation in our economic, cultural and political life. [[4]](#footnote-4)

1. http://clas.berkeley.edu/research/immigration-economic-benefits-immigration [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/immigration-benefits-us-so-lets-legalize-all-work [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/immigration/255237-anti-immigrant-activists-more-prone-to-terrorism-than-refugees [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vijay-k-mathur/immigrants-are-assets-for-innovation\_b\_9228290.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)