Welcome!

Thanks!

**Recognition:**

Quixote: Making the Impossible Possible

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**Slide 1: Founding Doc**

Ten years ago, The Media Consortium was founded to meet three fundamental challenges:

* **To transition from** legacy media to digital media platforms and the related revenue changes entailed by this digital revolution;
* to **build a progressive media system** to counter the right-wing echo chamber then being created by Rush Limbaugh and Fox news;
* and to be better **prepared for a future** our founders realized would be fluid and unpredicatable

Have we met those challenges? And if so, what’s next?

**Slide 2: Three Challenges**

The simple answer is this:

* We have succeeded in transitioning legacy outlets to digital formats. And, I think to our surprise and gratification, just about all of the original founders figured out how to make money in this new ecology. But the digital revolution has not ended—it continues, so the challenge continues.

**Slide 3 Mother Jones**

* We have succeeded in creating a strong progressive media voice. Perhaps the most stunning example was Mother Jones’ 47% video that exposed the classism at the heart of the Romney campaign. Like the 47% video, many of these successes are due to the work of individual members. But as a Consortium we are learning how to collaborate for impact, as we did in Wisconsin in 2010 and Occupy May Day in 2012—and as I hope we will do this year.

**Slide 4: Back to Three Challenges**

* The last challenge is the most significant. How do you prepare for the unknown? It is here that I believe the Consortium, as a Consortium, offers the most value to its members, and it is the challenge that has shaped this conference.

It was really hard for me to write this talk. I got to this point, and I kept wanting to tell you more about all our successes. I wanted to tell you how we have prepared for five years to meet our challenges by growing an incredible peer network that, due to the excellent work of my colleague Manolia Charlotin, produced 30 collaborations this year alone.

**Slide 5: Wordle**

I even made a wordle of our collaborations! And you can get that talk, if you hang around until Saturday, when I’ll give our annual report.

The fact is, I didn’t want to move ahead because… well because racism. The challenge is racism.

To be clear, I’m not talking about Trump racism, or the racist talk I got along with this nice blowout yesterday, but about racism within the very structure of the media itself. And I’m not at all suggesting that Media Consortium outlets are more racist in their structures than others—far from it. But here we are.

The Media Consortium’s founders were well aware that they were all white and that their audiences were white. Efforts were made to bring in member outlets that primarily served communities of color, like Colorlines. But frankly, the real focus of the Consortium’s members in its early years was on their own economic survival.

More recently, and especially since the Black Lives Matter movement started, we have seen Media Consortium outlets make significant investments in telling stories about people of color, often by hiring staff or freelancers who are people of color. The wordle, which I’ve cleverly left up on the screen, shows that a significant number of our collaborations in 2015 focus on immigration, Black Lives Matter, and other stories about race.

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Yet, I think many of us sense there is still a problem—and a lost opportunity. In some cases, outlets are being more inclusive in their storytelling, but still have primarily white audiences. Or outlets are succeeding in attracting audiences of color, but those audiences are not as engaged—are not giving facebook love, or tweeting, or donating, at the same rate as white donors. We need to find out why.

In 2005, there was an opportunity cost to not transitioning to the web.

Today, there is an opportunity cost to not being racially equitable. That is the challenge that this conference is designed to start to answer.

Today, many sessions are focusing on community engagement in general. Tomorrow’s workshop with Race Forward will provide us with a common language for talking about structural racism, and provide time and space for us to begin identifying choices we are making that may be preventing more engagement from communities we seek.

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I want to end by tying this race equity work to a larger vision. Media Consortium members are largely national and regional media. To truly tell the stories of the people of North America, we need to be able to partner with local media, and especially with media like Al Dia and WURD that serve local Latino, Black and foreign language communities.

We need to be able to find local stories that have national impact in order to fight back against the corporate power structures that want to hide those stories. And we need to make sure communities can localize national stories so they can better understand how those stories relate to their daily lives. In other words, even as we build our intra-net among our members, we have to build an inter-net between TMC members and others in the independent sector.

Race equity work—getting our own houses in order—will help Media Consortium better partners for these local community media.

I’m not talking about the racism expressed by our politicans or the overt or implicit bias one person may have about a group of other people. Those racisms all exist. The challenge we in the media face is structural racism.

One sign of structural racism is staffing—is your staff all white? Another sign is storytelling—are you telling intersectional stories, about the intersection of the wage gap and house ownership by black workers, about the intersection of the criminal justice system and detention centers, about the intersection of climate change and the black and brown people most likely to live in flood zones? Even if you have a diverse staff and great storytelling, are you engaging communities of color? That’s not a question about who is in your audience—it is a question about who is engaging with your content.

I want to be clear at the outset that I’m not singling out progressive independents here. Far from it. With the exception of Vice and Buzzfeed, Media Consortium members are he challenge here is hard to quantify.

Many of you have critiqued structural racism in corporate media. But let’s also take a long look at our own sector. When the Occupy movement hit, progressive media were the first on the scene. In fact, I think some of you had reporters camping out on Wall Street the very first day. When the Ferguson protest happened, a few of our larger outlets—Democracy Now!, for example--sent reporters. But they were outsiders. They were not “in the protest.” The only media actually in the protest was Black Twitter.

Since Ferguson, so many of you have ramped up. I’m proud that

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The Media Consortium is not a trade association. It is a peer network expressly built to create collective impact.

**Slide 5: TMC map**

Collective impact is the idea that multiple organizations coming at a problem from different directions can create new solutions and make changes far more reaching than the sum of their parts would indicate. It’s a strategy used to tackle especially deep and complex social problems that don’t have easy, obvious, or even singular solutions.

Collective impact requires that organizations do more than publish each other’s work or share information. It requires that organizations work together to solve problems and tell stories.

Over the past five years, the Media Consortium has built the infrastructure needed to create collective impact. Just this year alone, my colleague Manolia Charlotin has organized over 30 collaborations. We have

used the collective impact approach in a reporting project we did last year on pesticide use in Kauai. Journalists from multiple outlets worked together to tell a story about multinational corporations using dark money to prevent regulation of pesticide spraying that was injuring children’s health—and at the same time the importance of farmwork to native Kauaians and the possibilities to organic farming as an alternative.