

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* and *Chicago Reporter*, to bring together immigrant advocates and service providers with diverse media that serve the South Asian, East Asian, Latino, African and Caribbean communities.

The genesis of this convening took place immediately after a spring On The Table gathering hosted by CHANGE Illinois, where our director of programs Manolia Charlotin met Sarah Brune of Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and Kathleen Yang-Clayton of Asian Americans Advancing Justice. In the aftermath of that robust dialogue on racial equity, TMC connected with several community and 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. **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.**

Part I

In September we will host a tele-briefing with our independent media members, ethnic media, immigrant and voting rights advocates. This briefing will help frame the main issues that the collaborative hopes to tackle in this effort — from election access and voting guidelines, to comprehensive immigration reform and the economy. We have found these types of tele-briefings to be effective in providing a platform for issue experts to build relationships with journalists. They also serve as a means to develop potential stories and collaborations among media outlets.

Part II

During the first week in October, we will host a community media gathering at the In These Times offices for a deeper dive into the issues with a panel of experts and a series of breakout groups. **With this convening we aim to engage in a robust exchange that will further inform journalists and help shape inter-media story collaborations. Our goal for this convening is to develop strategic framework and editorial plan for an election story series with at least 5-7 media outlets.**

Key Partners

In These Times

Chicago Reporter

Illinois Campaign for Political Reform

CHANGE Illinois

Asian Americans Advancing Justice