Immigrant Voter Suppression: A #TMCinColor Collaboration

This election cycle has been driven by a narrative anchored in fear. Political figures have seized upon the electorate’s growing concern for their economic security and frustration with cultural shifts to marginalize and scapegoat immigrant communities. Against this prevailing narrative, several of the Media Consortium’s member outlets have foregrounded the desire by those in the immigrant community to fully participate in our society, focusing on efforts by immigrants to become citizens and to vote.

During the 2012 election season, *Colorlines* and *The Nation* partnered on Voting Rights Watch, a series of on the ground reports by journalists of color and immigrant journalists in communities where voters are being threatened by intimidation, dubious voter roll purges, early voting cut-offs and voter ID schemes. This spring, *Making Contact* launched their Immigrants and Elections series with stories about young Latinos in Arizona and Muslims in Michigan working to mobilize their communities to educate voters. Last week, the *Texas Observer* reported the story of a West Texas sheriff who waged an aggressive campaign to intimidate voters in the Latino community. These stories help make a significant difference. Following the Observer story, a local voting rights group asked the Department of Justice to investigate the nefarious practices.

We seek to expand this work across the entire Media Consortium membership of 80 independent news platforms. 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 our organization’s annual meeting in February 2016, members overwhelmingly approved a focus on the stories of immigrants.

Over the next 9 months, from June 1, 2016 to February 1, 2017, the Media Consortium will birth over 25 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 and community-based organizations to ensure that reporters are drawn from and engage with immigrant communities. By producing these story collaborations that document experiences of new Americans who are trying to participate in the democratic process, we can help reflect the many ways they work to uphold democracy.

Our aim will be to shift public opinion from fear of immigrants to an embrace of immigrants as members of our thriving democratic community. We know that we can change conversations in this way when our outlets work together. Over the past four years, the Media Consortium has conducted an experiment with Prof. Gary King at Harvard to measure change in sentiment around particular issues, comparing weeks when our outlets publish a story and weeks when they do not. Prof King found that our outlets, working collaboratively, do cause a measurable change in sentiment. With additional funding we will be able to apply this tool to our Immigrant Voter Suppression Project.

Our director for the Immigrant Voter Suppression 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.

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

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