**#Who Counts: A Reporting Project on Immigrant Voter Rights**

On July 25, the Media Consortium launched Who Counts, a project centering immigrant voices on voting rights. The project was designed to harness the transformative power of journalism to tell stories by the people most directly impacted by the political debate on immigration. Our aim was to support reporters in answering these vital questions:

* Who counts as an American?
* Whose vote counts?
* Who is doing the counting?

Because the goal was to center immigrant voices, the project created three events that put journalists from independent media in direct conversation with immigrant advocates, local leaders in voting access and racial justice, and the media that serve immigrant communities:

* **WhoCounts Chicago** (October 5) featured representatives from Change Illinois, Chicago Votes, Just Democracy Coalition, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and Coalition for a Better Chines American Community in conversation with journalists from In These Times, The Chicago Reporter, WVON, Gozamos, Vocalo, Radio L’Union, Contexture Media and Public Narrative.
* **WhoCounts New York** (October 8) featured representatives from the New York Immigrant Coalition in conversation with reporters from Feet in 2 Worlds.
* **WhoCounts North Carolina** (October 14) featured a conversation between experts from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, the Insitute for Southern Studies, NALEO and the South East Asian Coalition, filmed by the People’s Channel of Durham and replayed by Media Consortium members.

In addition to these in-person events, the WhoCounts project featured telephone briefings aimed at providing reporters sources and information for stories on immigrant voting rights:

* July 12, 2016:
* August 31, 2016:

**Impact**

The stories created by TMC outlets on immigrant voting rights have been captured on our WhoCounts tumblr, <http://whocounts.tumblr.com/>with over 20 stories per month in September and October.

*Bringing together journalists and diverse community-based organizations is important in and of itself. A couple of comments from speakers have influenced how we are reporting two upcoming stories – one on new voter laws, the other on English-language programs in public schools.—*Susan Smith Richardson, The Chicago Reporter

*The NYC Who Counts event supported our reporting by connecting our editorial staff to people from immigrant activism, journalism and music who offered fresh perspectives and storylines for the stories they were in the process of reporting on about millennial immigrants and the 2016 election—*John Rudolph, Feetin2Worlds

In addition, content from our briefings was picked up and run by several outlets:

Making Contact: <http://www.radioproject.org/2016/10/immigrants-elections-pt-2-barriers-to-the-ballot/>

**Looking Ahead**

Questions about who counts as an American will not end with the 2016 election. In fact, it is likely that immigration reform will be a significant focus of the next administration. The Media Consortium plans to continue our WhoCounts project to enable immigrant groups to tell their stories to journalists.

What we learned from WhoCounts 2016 is that we have broader impact and reach when we create rich audio and video opportunities for immigrant storytelling. Journalists who could not attend our in-person or phone briefings did pick up the audio/video from those and used them in their reporting. In the future, instead of creating our own events, we will seek to partner with immigrant groups to ensure that the content of those events is recorded and disseminated.

We also hope to implement a practice that has worked in the past: provide news outlets with minigrants to do collaborative reporting on specific issues impacting immigrants in the United States. We are especially interested in supporting reporting on the effects of children of immigrant detainees.