

# ORGANIZING THE MIDWEST

## DISRUPTING MYTHS AND BUILDING MULTIRACIAL GOVERNING COALITIONS

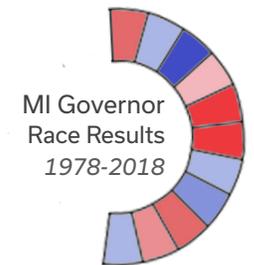
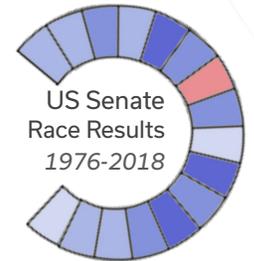
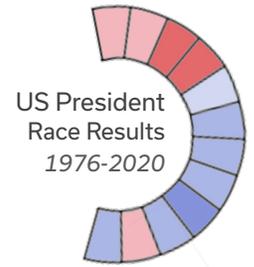
### Michigan Addendum

Michigan has emerged as a key battleground for efforts to protect democracy and advance a host of important policies such as paid sick days, raising the minimum wage, and criminal justice reform. Michigan's 501c3 landscape is characterized by a diverse set of community, faith, and constituency-based organizations that have emerged in the past five years. It has robust networks, including a statewide budget coalition and voter engagement tables. The work of these state tables complements organizational strategies of deep base building and statewide campaigns.

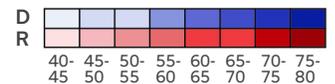
Michigan's community organizing infrastructure is defined by a predominance of leaders of color, the relative youth of organizations (almost all are less than five years old if not younger), the massive expansion of these organizations as Michigan has been the focus of national investment, and the concentration of those organizations in southeast Michigan (Detroit Metro). While progressive infrastructure was undermined by the passing of Right to Work legislation in 2013, in 2018 Michigan organizations won two democracy ballot initiatives that transferred power to draw the state's congressional and legislative districts from the state legislature to an independent redistricting commission and added eight voting policies to the Michigan Constitution, including straight-ticket voting, automatic voter registration, same-day voter registration, and no-excuse absentee voting.

Michigan organizations have the challenge and opportunity of knitting together multiracial coalitions in a very divided state. The Organizing the Midwest report lays out four strategies to accomplish this:

- 1 Invest strategically to mobilize Black, immigrant, and young leaders
- 2 Organize conflicted white communities with new and proven strategies
- 3 Advance a Race Class Narrative in Michigan
- 4 Establish electoral programs through independent state ecosystems



Key: Winning Ratios Per Party



**8,061,525**

MI Registered Voters, 2020



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Education and Childcare

Community

organizations and labor unions are working together to improve public education, fighting to expand access to PreK and higher education for all students as well as addressing the mounting student debt crisis. Groups are working to organize childcare providers and the families they serve, exploring funding mechanisms to increase access while advocating for an income tax that would underwrite quality accessible childcare for all families.



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Water and Health Equity

Aging oil pipelines

in the Straits of Mackinac, the poisoning of Flint's water supply, and the rise of harmful algae blooms in Lake Erie paint a picture of a state that is fighting to protect and preserve its water resources from privatization and corporate misuse. The national attention of the poisoning of thousands of Flint residents has catalyzed a set of ambitious environmental justice campaigns by organizing and



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Criminal Justice Reform

Michigan has one of the highest

incarceration rates in the Midwest, and many groups have been working to end the practice of mass incarceration by advocating for alternatives to prison, greater opportunities for returning citizens, and re-imagining the way in which public safety resources are allocated.

# STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTMENT IN MICHIGAN



**\$3M**  
needed



**\$2.5M**  
needed



**\$2.5M**  
needed



**\$3.5M**  
needed

## INVEST IN BLACK, IMMIGRANT & YOUNG LEADERS

At the center of the ecosystem is a set of emerging organizations led by people of color. This is a particular strength for Michigan, which has the largest percentage of people of color of any Midwestern state and creates an opportunity to invest deeply in those constituencies with multiple strategies across a broad set of groups.

Notable organizations include We the People, Mothering Justice, Oakland Forward, MI United, Rising Voices, Moses, Detroit Action, Michigan Student Power Network, Mothers of Hope, MI Liberation, and others.

## ORGANIZE CONFLICTED WHITE COMMUNITIES

The decline in the quality of education has become the flashpoint for communities across Michigan – a state that is struggling with a worsening teacher shortage and student mental health challenges. 482 Forward, a grassroots parent organization, and teachers' unions have built a broad statewide coalition for fighting for education justice aimed at improved compensation for educators, reducing class sizes, supporting students, and increasing revenue for public education. They are fighting two initiatives sponsored by billionaire Betsy DeVos that would take away hundreds of millions a year from schools to benefit for-profit private schools.

In addition, Sierra Club and Clean Water Action are mobilizing white voters around issues of water and climate change.

## ESTABLISH A RACE CLASS NARRATIVE IN MICHIGAN

We Make Michigan is partnering with We Make the Future to further develop the work of Anat Shenker Osorio, Heather McGhee, and Ian Haney Lopez to build messaging that addresses race and class while moving independent voters. That work is anchored by a set of organizing groups and SEIU.

In addition, Engage Michigan also runs a multifaceted program that includes providing spokespeople training for members of local organizations, strengthening the communications capacity of Detroit groups through its Detroit Media Project, and supporting narrative work through its Heroes' Narrative Training effort.

## STRENGTHEN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL ECOSYSTEMS

In 2022, there is likely to be a set of ballot measures that address voting rights, payday lending, reproductive freedom and minimum wage. There is not a singular state power organization that holds the majority of work in the state but rather work is distributed across a wide breadth of organizations. This can be a challenge for building coherent statewide strategies and alignment, but it is also a strength and makes the state nimble in its ability to do micro-targeting of key constituencies that organizations have authentic reach into.

The c3 coordinating table, Michigan Voice, works with 44 BIPOC groups throughout the state, many of which are small to mid-sized. Plans for the upcoming year include significant in-person voter contact around key issues like voting access as well as some voter registration (Michigan has a very high rate of registration and has same-day registration) and election protection support. In total, groups are planning to contact 3.1 million voters in 2022 either in person, by phone, or by text.