


ORGANIZING THE MIDWEST

Disrupting Myths and Building Multiracial Coalitions



Few societies in history have managed to be both multiracial and genuinely democratic. That is our challenge. It is also our opportunity. If we meet it, America will truly be exceptional.

*Steven Levitsky
How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future*

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This report is intended to provide guidance for 501(c)(3) charitable organizations engaged in nonpartisan activities advancing racial, social, and economic justice causes in the Midwest.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The battle for America's democracy will be contested, won, or lost in the Midwest. The region is a defining battleground for issues ranging from voting rights and immigration reform to raising the minimum wage. Facing uncertain long-term economic and demographic trends, alongside a global pandemic, the region's history of volatility and increasing precarity have brought us to a defining moment. We have the opportunity to advance a bold agenda and build sustainable, multiracial coalitions in the Midwest – but only if we choose a radically different course, a new way forward.

This report argues for that new way forward: a practice of politics in the Midwest that addresses the problem of power, people's despair about their own agency, and their loss of faith in every level of government, while growing their hopes and vision for a better future. Our analysis is based upon the fundamental idea that politics happens in the context of community and belonging. Most importantly, communities should own and benefit from the political power they build, because when that happens agency is restored and democratic participation can grow.

This report lays out the historic political volatility of the region and the underlying causes of this volatility. The hope and despair of the people of the Midwest is driven by the interlocking forces of deindustrialization, deeply segregated communities, growing precarity, and the failure of our political system to address the destabilization of people's economic and cultural identities. This has left white people deeply conflicted and susceptible to the appeals of demagoguery. It has caused Black people to question the very efficacy of their participation in democracy, having seen so little positive change in their neighborhoods in the face of systemic racism. And it has left immigrants, Native, and young people wondering if they even belong. Understanding the precarity of Midwestern communities is fundamental to increasing their participation in the democratic process.

In addition, this report unpacks the implications of demographic trends highlighting the decline of rural and urban areas, the growth and diversification of suburbs, slower overall population growth, an aging population, and the dramatic and disparate impacts of segregation in a region that is the second most segregated in the country. The Midwest is not an easy geography to organize. This report confronts that truth and makes the case for distinct and far-reaching strategies with each constituency. The Midwest has the second-largest Black population of any region in the US, and it is no coincidence that some of the largest and most dynamic organizing for Black Lives Matter was launched and is rooted in places like Ferguson, Missouri and Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. The region's history of political volatility creates a unique opportunity for community organizations to influence the debate and substance of policy discussions through nonpartisan strategies.

This report attacks the myths about Midwesterners, questions corresponding assumptions that have taken root, and challenges the flawed *solutions* that regional and national operatives use as a result. The first myth is that there was a fundamental political realignment in 2016 and that the region has swung to a particular political party. The second myth is that organizing people in the Midwest is a choice either to engage only people of color, or to frantically chase white working class constituencies. The third myth is that organizing can work in the Midwest by engaging white residents with messages about the economy and Black residents with messages about race, while ignoring Native, Latino, AAPI, and others. The fourth myth is that the process of dumping billions of dollars into paid ads each cycle by political parties is an effective means to long-term community engagement, rather than investing in the human capacity to lead and to govern.

We offer an alternative path. We look at white, Black, and emerging immigrant communities in a regional context and chart how hope and despair drive both volatility and shifts in civic participation. To definitively bring each of these groups into increased participation in all forms of the democratic process, we argue that a far deeper, more nuanced, and long-term approach to organizing is needed. We also argue that we must deal with race and class together, rejecting the false choice of having to lead with one or the other. We call for the kind of deep canvassing and relational organizing that has been proven as the most effective way to engage these communities, but that national operatives rarely have the patience or interest to practice.

We lay out a strategy for building multiracial coalitions and present an alternative approach. We advocate for *flipping the formula* away from sporadic engagement in these communities to an integrated year-round organizing and power building program. As the political scientist, Hahrie Han recently said,

The challenge of democracy in the 21st century comes from a society that has neglected the challenge of enabling people's power... the most intractable social problems are problems that require power-oriented solutions. The question is whether we will do the hard work of investing in the institutions, processes, and practices of civil society, the economy, and governance to make it real.¹

Finally, we make a set of recommendations on how to invest in state-based ecosystems. This is an agitation to donors, philanthropy, and practitioners regarding the deep commitments necessary to win the Midwest. There are no shortcuts to building long-term power, and the Midwest is vitally important to the American democratic experiment.

We have never truly had a multiracial democracy in America, but we argue that this is possible even in states that are not majority people of color. As the author Steven Levitsky said,

Few societies in history have managed to be both multiracial and genuinely democratic. That is our challenge. It is also our opportunity. If we meet it, America will truly be exceptional.²

This report was written by grassroots community organizers from the Midwest with decades of experience in engaging urban, rural, and suburban communities on a variety of issue campaigns and voter registration efforts. We have knocked on hundreds of thousands of doors, organized countless house meetings, and see each day the hope and despair in the faces of our own families and children.

The Midwest has long been a volatile region with a deep history of organizing. It was the birthplace of the auto workers and steelworkers unions, and has long been at the forefront of people's movements. The history of political volatility in the region is the product of the economic instability and a concentrated effort by some to cultivate suspicion, fear, and division in our communities. At fault also are shallow, transactional operatives who fail to grasp, engage, and organize communities to truly build on the potential that exists: a vibrant multiracial and cross-class coalition committed to transforming the region.

A New Path Forward

The dominant strategy of sporadic, short-term, *parachute* approaches at the state level is a path of diminishing returns. This plays out in national campaigns where organizations drop staff into states hoping to build support for a particular issue or cause, and during election cycles when donors invest in short-term voter registration and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts. In this model, communities are viewed transactionally as consumers of information, and the approach is to develop a *treatment program* to educate Midwesterners on issues or particular policy campaigns. This approach to communities does not result in strong democratic institutions, increased participation, or a vibrant democracy. This traditional approach is characterized by:

- » Focus on community engagement and increasing democratic participation only during election cycles with little concern for accountability, governance, or ongoing engagement after an election;
- » Prioritizing tactical scale and efficiency, absent a deep and long-term engagement with communities. This lends itself to tactics accelerated by late money dumps where a *field program* organizes brief canvassing bursts alongside air and digital ad dumps solely for the purpose of increasing participation in elections; and
- » Targeting, narrative, and strategy that are driven by technical experts based in Washington, DC, rather than embedded practitioners who live in and understand the Midwest.

This strip mining approach to increasing democratic participation is less and less effective as communities revolt against the transactional shallowness that fails to account for their true interests and worldview. This shallow approach is no antidote for a growing segment of residents who rely on social media feeds to shape their worldview with all Midwesterners paying a price for targeting by anti-democratic propaganda machines in the US and abroad.

This report argues for a new way forward – a practice of organizing in the Midwest that addresses the problem of power, people’s despair about their own agency, and their loss of faith in every level of government while tapping into their hopes and vision for a better future. Our analysis is based on the fundamental idea that democratic participation happens in the context of community and belonging. And most importantly, communities should own and benefit from the power they build.

We draw inspiration from the success of this new way forward as practiced by an emerging set of state based organizing groups such as the New Georgia Project, ISALAH in Minnesota, Virginia New Majority Education Fund, the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, Faith in Indiana, Citizens Action Wisconsin Education Fund, Detroit Action Education Fund, the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, and many others. These organizations have created a new way forward and their practical, lived success has built a new practice of engagement that is already having an impact across the Midwest. Transformational leaders like Stacey Abrams and Lauren Groh-Wargo are not just national political figures, they are leaders that have created a new way forward and their practical, lived success has built a new practice of politics that is already being engaged by independent groups and holds promise for the Midwest. The key principles of this approach follow.



People are organized participate in democracy. They don't just arrive there.



Membership organizations, unions, and community institutions are essential centers of gravity for moving constituencies of people into political action and creating political homes.

This approach is supported by the academic literature on political participation. In Ziad Munson's research on pro-life activists, he argues that the reasons commonly held for people to become pro-life activists – that conservative religion spurs people to action or that individuals choose to become anti-abortion activists on their own because the issue is intensely important to them – are actually not the driving factors. Instead, he found that anti-abortion beliefs are as often the result of activism as the cause of it; and the role of organized religion in the process of making activists is not nearly as decisive as many presume:

For most of those who get involved, pro-life activism begins not because of any epiphany; not because they first arrive at some new realization or unequivocal beliefs about the evils of abortion, but because they are drawn into activities in a series of small steps that, at first, happen without much thought about their larger meaning.

- » *The process begins at a turning point in a person's life, when s/he bumps into someone already in the pro-life movement, interacting with a friend, neighbor, or colleague in the course of an ordinary day. Such encounters happen all the time, but they can open the door to new forms of activism when they occur during a juncture of change in a person's life course – for example, after someone leaves home for college, relocates to a new part of the country, retires, or goes through any other event that brings modifications in daily routines and habits.*
- » *During such turning points, a person may dip a toe into anti-abortion activities, not so much out of preconceived commitment to the cause, but because of simple curiosity, solidarity with a friend, or a promise to go with a neighbor to an anti-abortion meeting.*
- » *Only after people get involved in meetings or events, do most neophytes begin to develop clear pro-life beliefs. Thereafter, some go on to greater levels of movement participation over many years, while others pull back after the initial engagements.³*

Munson's research draws out the distinction between a patient commitment built over time in relationship with others versus an issue mobilization approach. National organizers and coastal elites often argue that the formula to build political participation is polling to find out what people care about, the development of core messages around those issues and a plea to Midwesterners to participate in a policy campaign focused on those issues. Munson's research shows how flawed that approach is, given how people are actually engaged in real life.

People are organized into political movements through their relationships with others. Their worldviews are shaped through their participation. This top down approach fails to grasp the everyday nature of democratic participation or the ways in which worldview evolves; it does not build organization or capacity let alone transform people. And when that approach fails, those same organizers predictably defend themselves by complaining that people *vote against their self-interest* or are *apathetic* when they never truly embraced an effort to change or shape their worldview in the first place.



People vote when they feel their vote matters and that they have ownership over the outcomes.

In Hahrie Han's 2009 book, *Moved to Action*, she analyzes what motivates political participation by people who face significant barriers to participation. She writes: "People act not only because they generally care about politics but also because they care about addressing problems in their own lives or living up to a personal sense of who they are."⁴



Long-term power is developed through consistent investment over time in strategic geographies, constituencies, and issue campaigns; election participation is one component of this strategy, and is not always realized in the short term.



Successful narratives on the issues that we are advancing are those that motivate our base, move independents, and confront our opposition by addressing issues head on. They do not shy away from addressing race and class.⁵

We can successfully organize in the Midwest, but we must shift from status quo, transactional engagement to a new practice of organizing that charts a patient and long-term strategy for building multiracial governing coalitions.

In its research, P3 Labs at Johns Hopkins University describes three approaches to building power: Electoral Sandcastles, Thousand Flowers, and Movement Ecosystems, explained below. The approach we've taken in the region for the past decade is the culmination of tireless organizing by countless leaders who have laid the foundation for a Movement Ecosystem in the Midwest.

The Midwest Movement Ecosystem includes state-based organizing groups such as the one referenced above, but ecosystems are more than just organizing groups. Homegrown donor tables in every state driven by in-state donors are also vital, as are voter engagement coordinating tables such as State Voices and Progress Now.

Three Modes of Political Organizing

ELECTORAL SANDCASTLES The elaborate but ephemeral campaign structures that take shape during electoral cycles can be likened to sandcastles, washed away at the end of campaign season, leaving little to no organizing infrastructure behind. The structure of sandcastles is clearest in how they amass and spend large sums of money in what Sheingate (2015) refers to as "the business of politics".

THOUSAND FLOWERS This mode of political organizing refers to grassroots mobilization efforts that typically begin online and rely on a loosely federated or fully decentralized structure, with significant numbers of local outposts that rely on the initiative of largely autonomous volunteers. Roth (2017) describes this form of organizing as "aggregat[ions] of the like-minded".

MOVEMENT ECOSYSTEM Distinct from a tactical coalition that emerges and disappears after an election cycle or policy fight, movement ecosystems in this typology are made up of constituency base-building organizations that are in durable and interdependent relationship with one another. Here we look specifically at organizations that are in long-term strategic alignment to build multiracial governing power and pass progressive policies across the Midwest.

Sophisticated narrative and communication strategies developed with deep practice and leadership from the region, such as the Race Class Narrative and groups including Progress Now affiliates, have also been essential as key building blocks to civic engagement efforts.

The Political Context

Historically, the Midwest is a politically volatile region and continues to be divided today. The Midwest is divided not only by political party but by worldview, in ways that shape the possibilities and day-to-day lives of poor communities and communities of color.

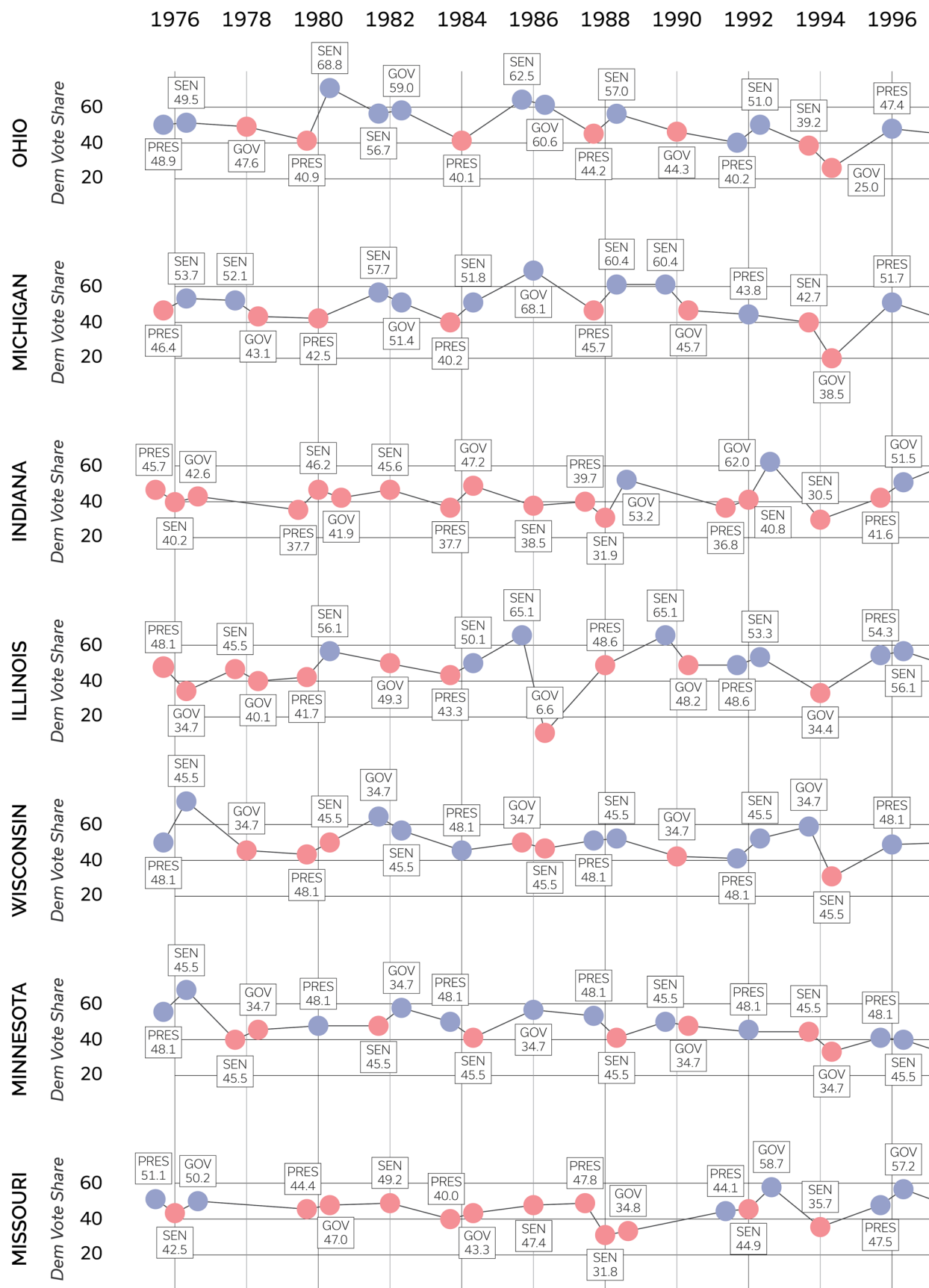
These divisions often limit the possibility of transformative organizing campaigns to end the criminalization and mass incarceration of communities of color, to win good jobs, to create affordable housing, and to secure childcare and quality public schools for all Midwesterners.

Yet this report argues that we are more than the sum of our partisan divisions, and that the Midwest is not definitively in the thrall of any one worldview or political ideology. National pundits often want to characterize political swings in a particular election as long-term political realignment in the region. Political volatility is the norm across the Midwest when you analyze trends over the past four decades. The illustration on pages 9-10 maps the margins of victories and the swing from red to blue over the past forty years.

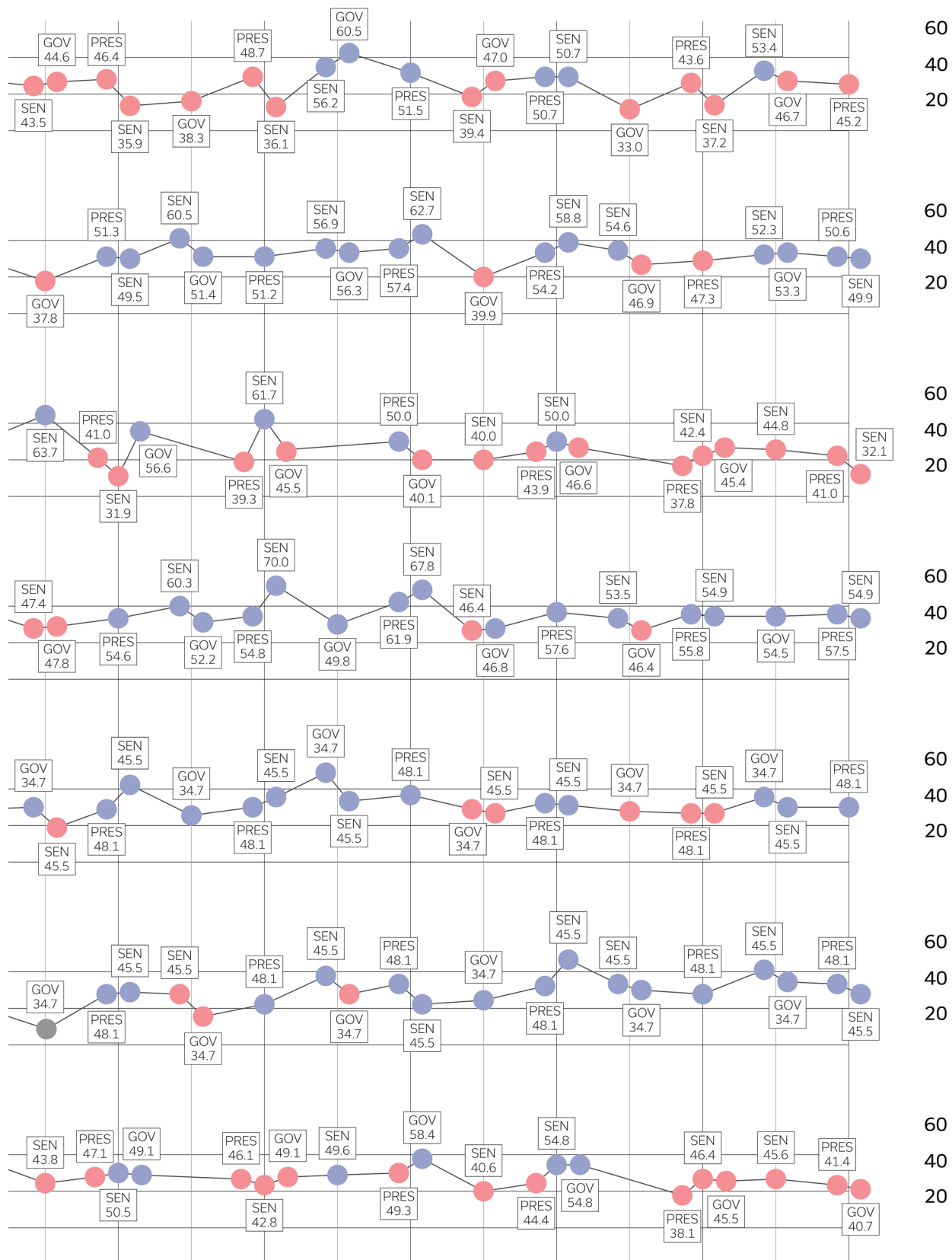
These volatile, complicated, and somewhat counterintuitive cultural and social divisions have only accelerated over the past two years due to the economic and cultural strain of the Covid-19 global pandemic which has disrupted and done lasting damage across the Midwest. The impact of the pandemic has further destabilized the economies of many Midwestern cities that have still not rebounded from the 2008 financial crisis. In a *USA Today* article on twenty eight cities that had not recovered from the recession a decade later, twenty one were in the Midwest with the highest concentration being in Michigan and Ohio.⁶

The pandemic is an ongoing crisis that will likely increase the pace and severity of political swings in the region. This volatility is the foundation for a defining fight for people's well-being and future – and progressives have the opportunity to engage in Midwestern communities by showing that they can deliver real material change that improves people's lives.

Fig 1: A History of Political Volatility in the Midwest, 1976-2020



1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020



HOPE, DESPAIR, AND PRECARITY IN THE MIDWEST

The Midwest is often derisively called the *Rust Belt* or *fly-over country*, and every election cycle the national media spotlights the story of a Midwestern town whose shuttered factory symbolizes the region's economic stagnation. Yet the political impact of deindustrialization is perhaps one of the most misunderstood phenomena in American politics. The combination of wealth stripping, eroded opportunity, and declining life expectancy in some of the most racially segregated cities in the country alongside a loss of identity has upended the lives of millions of Americans whose prosperous union jobs fell away – only to be replaced with economic volatility, downward mobility, and uncertainty. It is the recipe for the political volatility that has characterized the Midwest.

Deindustrialization is the result of a set of political choices that has caused staggering inequality and stagnant wages for many Midwesterners. While globalization and the international corporate race-to-the-bottom on wages is well understood, the shift from an economy that makes things to an economy driven by the financial industry is an untold story for this region. The impact of this shift on these communities' identity, culture, and politics defines the Midwest.

Over the past 30 years, the financial industry and administrations from both parties drove a set of policies constructed around *shareholder value* that upended long-term, productive investment in Midwestern manufacturing communities and involved:

- » Restructuring the corporate form to incentivize short-term profit for shareholders at the expense of workers, long-term stability, and competitiveness;
- » Massive deregulation, which steered capital toward the high risk/high return financial sector while neglecting investment in competitive manufacturing;
- » The refusal of Treasury Secretaries loyal to Wall Street to adjust US currency value to favor goods made with American labor;
- » Systematic dismantling of the corporate tax structure shifted enormous pools of surplus capital into the hands of elites, who increasingly poured money into ever more risky and speculative schemes, including burdening previously stable manufacturing companies with ultimately unsustainable debt levels essentially turning manufacturing firms into financialized assets to leverage and flip; and
- » Methodical attacks on collective bargaining resulted in a precipitous decline of union membership and the power of organized labor (see Figure 2).

Key to understanding this is the way in which capital moved out of manufacturing and into the financial sector. As Thomas Geoghegan described in his article *Infinite Debt: How unlimited interest rates destroyed the economy*:

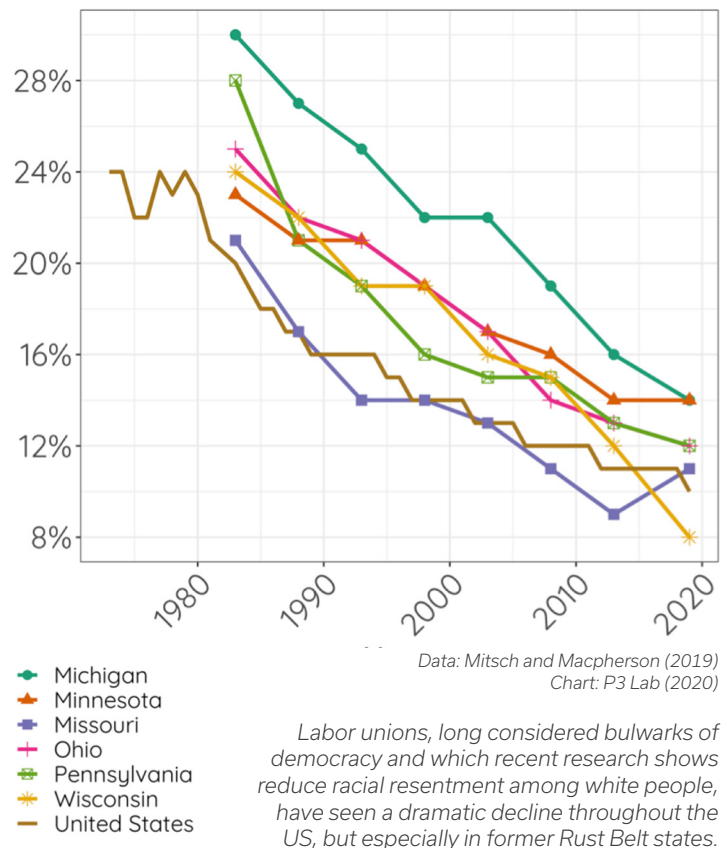
with no law capping interest, the evil is not only that banks prey on the poor (they have always done so) but that capital gushes out of manufacturing and into banking. When banks get 25 to 30 percent on credit cards, and 500 or more percent on payday loans, capital flees from honest pursuits like auto manufacturing.⁷

These changes created cyclical capital outflows from manufacturing, adding capital to a financial sector both here and around the world while enlarging trade deficits.⁸ In effect, a society that allows usurious interest rates not only takes advantage of poor and working class families but incentivizes capital to flee investment in the manufacturing sector while also eliminating the good jobs that working class families once depended upon. These trends were incredibly impactful to the daily lives of Midwesterners, creating a new reality that injected chaos, inequality, uncertainty, and precarity into the American economy. Jacob Hacker describes this change as the Great Risk Shift, namely:

a massive transfer of economic risk from the broad structures of insurance, including those sponsored by the corporate sector as well as by government, onto the fragile balance sheet of American families.⁹

Fig 2: Decline in Union Membership

Dramatic decline across Midwest states, 1983-2019



Hacker notes that, as explosive as the growth in inequality has been, even more stark is the growth of income instability – the increasing volatility of family income from year to year.¹⁰ A study of income volatility reveals that 45 percent of all non-elderly adults experience a drop in real family income over a two-year period.¹¹ This is bad enough, but since the 1970s these drops have become much more severe. While in 1970 the chance that a household would experience a 50 percent drop in income over a two-year period was minimal, by 2000 the number of families enduring such severe drops had more than doubled to ten percent. For a family in the Midwest earning the regional median household income of \$68,354 in 2019, a 50 percent loss meant an income drop of over \$34,000.¹² This is the sort of volatility that leads to bankruptcies, repossessed cars, evictions, foreclosures. In short, disaster.

As Hacker points out, this new economic insecurity is affecting almost everyone: those with advanced degrees, those who are high school dropouts, those in the middle of the income spectrum, and those who are the poorest. "You can be perfectly average, and you're still roughly twice as likely to see your income plummet as an average person was thirty years ago."¹³

But Hacker then argues that income instability is merely the beginning, because “as dramatic and troubling as [these] trends” are, “they vastly understate the true depth of the problem.”¹⁴ Income volatility exacerbates the threat to families’ financial well-being posed by budget-busting expenses like catastrophic medical costs and the need to self-fund retirement in an era of vanishing pensions, precarious and often low-wage employment, and frequent job changes. When we take in this larger picture, we see an economy not merely changed, but fundamentally transformed.

As Jennifer Silva points out in *We’re Still Here*, these forces have undercut and unraveled masculine identity built around the physicality of work and the primacy of being a provider.¹⁵ For African-

Americans, who had only recently begun to make significant gains economically, a path to economic security through unionized industrial jobs has largely evaporated. The dismantling of these fleeting new opportunities combined with some of the most segregated metropolitan areas in the country inflicted even greater damage on Black families, and in turn increasingly precarious white people had more incentive to defend the segregation keeping poor Black families out of their neighborhoods.¹⁶

The numbers give a hint at the destruction this new economy brought to manufacturing communities. Between 1980 and 2016, the number of US manufacturing jobs decreased by one-third, and over the last 20 years, five million manufacturing jobs have been wiped out.¹⁷

In Youngstown, Ohio, 50,000 jobs in steel and related industries were eliminated in

Fig 3: Midwest Wage Growth Worst in the Country

Change in real median wages by US Census region, 2000-2016

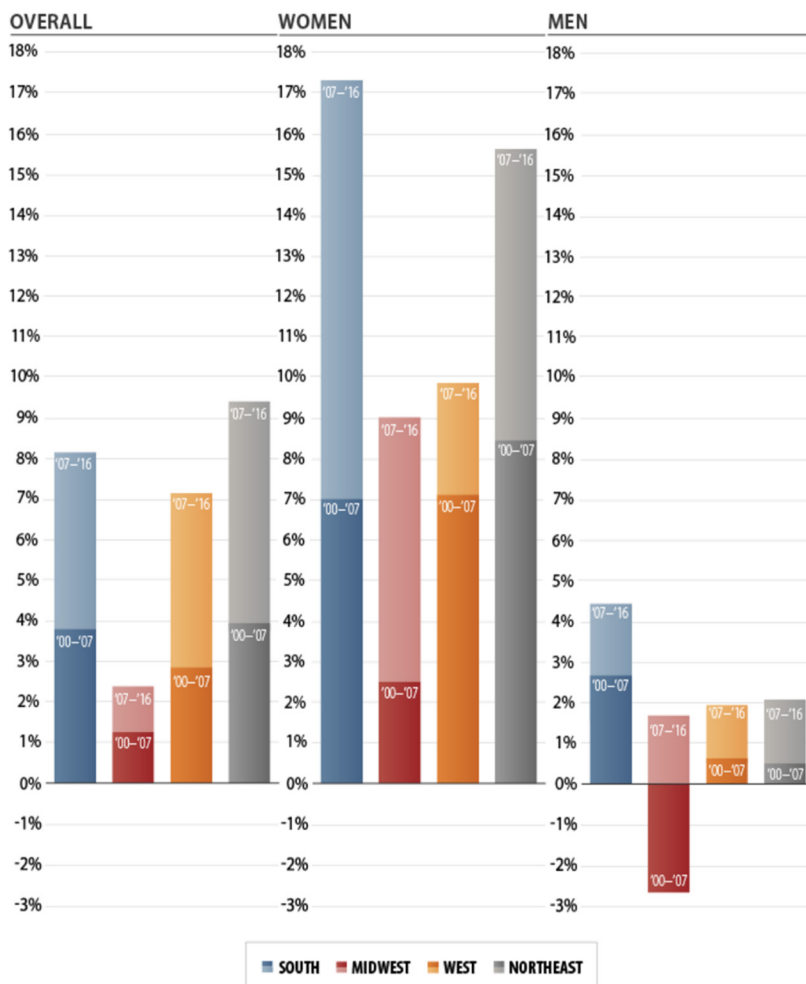


Chart: Center for American Progress, “The Midwestern Great Recession of 2001 and the Destruction of Good Jobs” (2017)³⁵

It is of note that the bulk of employment decline across the Midwest occurred between 2000–2007; the recession job market was similarly poor in other regions, but the Midwest has been struggling for much longer. Midwestern workers have also experienced the worst wage growth of any region in the country since 2000, seeing real median wages grow only 2 percent compared with an 8 percent national increase.

the 1970s and 1980s, and since 1990 in adjacent Trumbull County almost 70 percent of the remaining manufacturing jobs were destroyed.¹⁸ Between 1990 and 2007, 800,000 manufacturing jobs were eliminated in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin.¹⁹

In Monroe County, Ohio, 99 percent of the manufacturing jobs that existed in 1990 have been destroyed. This created a great deal of partisan volatility in the region and decimated the local economy as jobs disappeared, destabilizing families and whole communities.

This destruction is harmful not just because of the obvious and immediate hardships experienced by families and communities. Experiencing such profound insecurity, volatility, and economic devastation by such a huge swath of American society for such an extended period of time has profound and dangerous political consequences. This is especially true, given the fact that the period in which elites began to exploit economic

insecurity and inequality and shift economic risk onto everyday people also coincided with people of color finally winning and exercising civil, social, and economic rights. As linguist Anat Shenker Osorio points out:

[W]e know that the strongest psychological correlate to political ideology is tolerance of ambiguity. In other words, the level of comfort people have with change and complexity is a telling gauge for their political preferences.²⁰

"Most of us exist within a band of tolerance of ambiguity," making it possible to build greater support for economic and racial justice by "bringing people to greater comfort with the unknown, with change and with complexity."²¹ But what Hacker describes – and what the industrial Midwest has endured – are levels of volatility, risk, and insecurity that are potentially toxic not only to economic and racial justice, but to democracy itself.

Americans have been caught in a rip tide, and even if they are currently above water, they can feel the undertow. For those living in manufacturing communities in the industrial Midwest, the effects of elite corporate restructuring and financialization have been particularly devastating. For decades now, this rip tide has churned and tossed, pulled them under, and spit them back out.

As Shenker-Osorio argues, progressives tend to go *straight to defense* of existing policies instead of grappling with the real pain, anxiety, and humiliation that so many have been experiencing. Rather than acknowledge those valid fears, progressives are often confused as to why working class people *take action against their interests*, while simultaneously arguing for the same stale, ineffective, and anemic strategies that have done little to reverse the decline.²² This approach is deaf to what Midwesterners experience on a daily basis, leading people to look for someone who hears their pain and speaks to their struggles,²³ even if that person is a demagogue. This is exasperated by the absence of inoculating

organizations and intermediary institutions that could have served as bulwarks against this kind of demagoguery.

Shenker continues that "this deafness to what real people are feeling drives them toward populist movements that DO profess to hear them. Enter on cue [movements that embody authoritarian, nativist, and anti-democratic tendencies that speak directly to the economic insecurity and pain of Midwest families]. While their solutions may be way off the mark, the approach – providing a sense of control and agency through shared grievance and narrative – is compelling to a justifiably frightened and disillusioned populace."²⁴

If we do not understand the experience of the Great Risk Shift and figure out how to give political recognition to the fear and anxiety it has fed, especially in the context of Midwestern communities who have experienced deindustrialization, depopulation, and roiling disinvestment, we will struggle to find constructive ways forward politically.

From 2008 to the present day, an anti-democratic movement that thrives on fear, nationalism, birtherism, and racial anxiety has emerged. This movement exploits a vacuum left by the unwillingness of progressives to not only name but also confront the true drivers behind the Great Risk Shift: financial speculators, private equity firms driving short-term profit schemes, and politicians rewriting the rules to favor finance over manufacturing.

This anti-democratic movement scapegoats other nations, particularly nonwhite countries like China or Mexico, and the *turncoat* politicians that coddle them, while heaping blame on immigrants who *steal* American jobs. The anxiety rising out of the chaos and volatility of the new, deindustrialized economy is solved through a law and order frame, where unruly minorities must be controlled. During his first debate with Hillary Clinton, Trump embraced this anti-democratic movement, saying:

Decades of progress in bringing down crime are being reversed by [the Obama] administration's rollback of criminal enforcement. Homicides last year increased by 17 percent in America's fifty largest cities... In our nation's capital, killings have risen by 50 percent... In the President's hometown of Chicago... almost 4,000 have been killed... since he took office. The number of police officers killed in the line of duty has risen by almost 50 percent... Nearly 180,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records, ordered deported from our country, are tonight roaming free to threaten peaceful citizens.²⁵

Neither a product of racial anxiety nor economic anxiety alone, this anti-immigrant, anti-democratic movement is a toxic intertwining of both. Trump's speech at the Republican National Convention in 2016 reveals this. After blaming immigrants, foreign enemies, and inner city crime for the nation's woes, he seeks direct appeal to those affected by years of layoffs and plant closures:

I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals. These are the forgotten men and women of our country, and they are forgotten, but they will not be forgotten long. These are the people who work hard, but no longer have a voice. I am your voice.²⁶

Building support by vilifying "the other", this is a prime example of a populist movement that intuitively understands the politics of pain and anxiety that has gone unheeded and unrecognized by the establishment wings of both parties. A core element of the race-class dynamic of our politics is the question of whose pain counts as valid and whose should be discarded as fraudulent.²⁷

Populist and Anti-Immigrant Messaging Compounded Feelings of Precarity Across the Midwest

"We've been treated so unfairly by so many nations."³⁶

"As long as we are led by politicians who will not put America first, then we can be assured that other nations will not treat America with respect."³⁷

"Decades of record immigration have produced lower wages and higher unemployment for our citizens."³⁸

Residents of the industrial Midwest rightly recognize that their suffering and hardship have been ignored. With few exceptions, leaders from both parties have been far more sensitive to the needs of the donor class – the financial elites that have benefitted from, and substantially caused, the destruction of Midwestern manufacturing communities – than to the needs of those manufacturing communities.²⁸ But the members of these communities do not suffer equally,²⁹ and amidst racially segregated communities that have experienced the erosion of labor unions and other community institutions, they do not suffer deindustrialization in solidarity.³⁰

The Great Risk Shift and deindustrialization leave everyone to fend for themselves, and they are left to do so in communities deeply fractured by race. With the weakening of intermediary power organizations like unions, class explanations disappear – undermining collective identity and attempts to construct a *we are all in this together* politics.³¹ People are increasingly left to craft a sense of self and worth alone, without institutions of solidarity.

Sociologist Jennifer Silva found in her research that in deindustrialized towns, people begin to turn inward and focus on self-protection, endurance, and personal redemption. They begin to understand pain and suffering as a test of individual will power and forge an identity as one who has survived on their own. Overcoming pain on one's own becomes so central to the culture of deindustrialized communities, it also means that "invalidating the suffering of others...emerges as a moral and necessary choice."³²

Triumph over pain becomes a sort of competition, by which one proves one's worthiness or one's status. Each person elevates their own suffering as more worthy, a coping strategy that corrodes the possibility for solidarity.

Instead of mobilizing around shared identities . . . [they] harness stories of individually managing pain to bridge their personal experiences to the larger social world [where] they invalidate the pain of others when they fear that their own needs and sacrifices are going unrecognized.³³

The absence of mediating institutions or recognition of pain by either party serves as dry tinder for racial demagoguery and dog whistle politics³⁴ keen on legitimizing white people's suffering as the only legitimate suffering, as signaled by these movements. Thus, the suffering of some is legitimated and glorified by denying recognition and dignity to the suffering of others – the result of chronic political muteness to this suffering as a whole, while giving safe harbor to the actual perpetrators.

The politics of hope and despair in the Midwest has long been misunderstood. If we are to organize people in this region, we need to understand the interlocking impact of job loss, community identity loss, systemic racism, and the sense of many Midwesterners that the government has failed them completely.

Note: the following three-page timeline tracks major legal and economic decisions made by both parties in power from 1970-2020 that have led to deindustrialization, the decline of labor unions, and the disappearance of a strong working middle class. Financial bailout actions are highlighted in green and milestones tracking disinvestment in manufacturing, wealth inequality, and subsequent effects on Americans are highlighted in blue.

1970

Richard Nixon (Republican) In Presidential Office

1970: Manufacturing sector accounts for 18 million jobs and 25 percent of total US employment

1971: Nixon closes the gold window. Leads to boom in currency trading, speculation, and development of speculative financial instruments like derivatives.

1970: Milton Friedman launches movement by investor class to seize control of corporate governance.

1973: Options Theory devised by Fischer Black and Martin Scholes, leads to boom in options trading and support for derivative investments, i.e. currency swaps, mortgage-backed securities, various futures trading.

Gerald Ford (Republican) Takes Presidential Office

1974: Employment Retirement Income Security Act. Allowed pension funds and insurance companies to hold stock and high-risk bonds, creating large capital pools for investment, leveraged buyouts, hostile takeovers, mergers and acquisitions.

Jimmy Carter (Democrat) Takes Presidential Office

1979: *Marquette v First of Omaha*. Supreme Court prohibits states from capping interest rates on loans made by out-of-state banks, effectively eliminating caps on usurious lending practices. Steers capital into finance, as high-interest credit card lending becomes much more profitable than manufacturing investment.

1978: Top one percent of households hold 222 times more wealth than the average American family.

1980: Personal bankruptcy filings are less than 290,000.

1979: KKR launches Leveraged Buyout business model. Private equity firm demonstrates the profitability of a shareholder value approach, buys out the stock of Houdaille Industries (leader in auto parts and machine tools), unseats board, loads it with debt, and yields spectacular return for investors. Houdaille's debt burden left it vulnerable during 1980-81 recession and 2,200 high-skill jobs were lost.

1980: CEO compensation in stock options averages 20 percent.

1980: Manufacturing sector accounts for 19 million jobs and 20 percent of total US employment

1980: Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act. Voids interest rate ceilings on deposit accounts, incentivizing future innovations and speculative use of funds.

Ronald Reagan (Republican) Takes Presidential Office

1981: Reaganomics introduced as policy. Supply-side economics (low taxes, decreased regulation, free trade) justified as benefiting all through *trickle down* effects whereby tax cuts benefit job growth. In effect, they increased wealth disparity and funneled workers' productivity gains into growing pools of investor capital.

1981: Reagan fires striking air traffic controllers. Tough anti-union stance models corporate labor strategies. As firms profit more from financial activities than production, incentive to invest in workers declines; employees become liability as cash flow is steered toward debt payments.

1982: Garn-St. Germain Depository Institutions Act. Deregulation of thrift institutions, allowing savings and loan banks to make commercial loans, opening the door for risky behavior. Combined with earlier deregulation, leads to even deeper pools of capital for junk bonds to finance leveraged buyouts, allowing corporate raiders to buy companies with small amounts of equity while borrowing the rest using the acquired assets as collateral.

1982: BAILOUT. Mexico, Argentina, Brazil Debt Crisis. Federal Reserve package to avoid effect on US banks.

1982: *Edgar v Mite*. US Supreme Court subjects anti-takeover laws to scrutiny, opening opportunity for corporate raiders

1984: Bank Holding Company Act relaxed. Banks can now hold entire companies as an investment portfolio, even if companies perform no bank-related functions.

1984: BAILOUT. Continental Illinois Bank Aid. \$4 billion Federal Reserve, treasury, and FDIC rescue package.

1986-1989: BAILOUT. Discount Window Bailouts. Federal Reserve provides loans to 350 weak banks that would later fail, giving big depositors time to exit.

1986: Tax Reform Act. Top rate cut from 50 to 28 percent, top corporate rates cut from 50 to 35 percent. Fuels wealth disparity, government budget deficits, and cuts in services; funnels even more wealth into investor capital pools.

1987: BAILOUT. Post Stock Market Dive Rescue. Massive liquidity provided by Federal Reserve; rumors of clandestine involvement in futures market by Federal Reserve.

1987

1988

George HW Bush (Republican) Takes Presidential Office

1989: Financial Institutions Reform and Recovery Act. Deregulation of thrift institutions; allows for commercial lending and accounts that compete with money market mutual funds.

1990: Manufacturing sector accounts for 17.5 million jobs and 16 percent of total US employment

1989-1992: BAILOUT. Savings & Loan Bailout. US spends \$250 billion to rescue hundreds of savings and loan institutions that were mismanaged into insolvency.

1990-1992: BAILOUT. Citibank and Bank of New England. \$4 billion in aid to Bank of New England, then government assistance in arranging a Saudi cash infusion for Citibank.

Bill Clinton (Democrat) Takes Presidential Office

1994: Riegle-Neal Interstate Banking and Branching Efficiency Act. Eliminated restrictions on interstate banking and branching.

1994-1995: BAILOUT. Mexican Peso Rescue. Treasury supports the peso to backstop US investors in high-yield Mexican debt.

1996: Barnett Bank v Nelson. Banks can now sell insurance.

1996: Smiley v Citibank. States can no longer limit fees charged by out-of-state credit card companies. Fees and penalties skyrocket.

1997: Banks now able to buy securities firms.

1997: BAILOUT. Asian Currency Bailout. US pushes International Monetary Fund for rescue of embattled East Asian currencies to save American and other foreign investors.

1998: BAILOUT. Long-Term Capital Management. Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan helps arrange bailout for hedge fund with high-powered domestic and international connections.

1999: BAILOUT. Y2K Fears. Liquidity pumped out by Federal Reserve to ease Y2K concern helps fuel final NASDAQ bubbling.

2000: Commodity Futures Modernization Act. Excluded from regulation complex financial instruments like derivatives and credit default swaps, setting the stage for financial crises later in the decade as massive capital shifts to *shadow banking*.

1994: CEO compensation in stock options averages 50 percent

1994: North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA). Created a North American Free Trade Zone, allowing investors to move capital freely across borders without regard to labor or environmental standards. Facilitated investor-dominated corporate governance in which firms' assets were utilized as investment instruments to be leveraged, flipped, and off-shored to maximize short-term profits, putting enormous pressure on workers to accept wage and benefit cuts. Lower consumer prices provided a false reading of economic health due to rapidly increasing levels of consumer indebtedness that masked stagnating earnings across the workforce.

1996: Reinterpretation of Glass-Steagall Act. Federal Reserve allows bank holding companies to earn up to 25 percent of their revenues from investment banking practices.

1999: Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (Financial Services Modernization Act). Final dismissal of Glass-Steagall Act which separated investment and commercial banking to prevent speculative behavior that helped to cause the Great Depression. It passed with broad bipartisan support and was signed by Bill Clinton. Commercial banks, investment banks, securities firms, and insurance companies could now consolidate and also own nonfinancial corporations, essentially creating a new category of financial holding companies without any regulatory controls. Gives nonbank financial institutions access to insured deposits at commercial banks and dramatically increases liquid capital pools available for trading and speculation. Within a year, 500 new FHCs established, and three US banks become superbanks: Citigroup, Bank of America, and JPMorgan Chase. New complex and unregulated financial instruments begin to appear, such as commercial mortgage-backed securities, collateralized debt obligations, collateralized loan obligations, credit default swaps, and other derivatives.

2000: Manufacturing sector accounts for 17.2 million jobs and 13 percent of total US employment

George W Bush (Republican) Takes Presidential Office

2001: Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act. Lowered income tax brackets, limited estate tax, allowed higher IRA contributions, created employer-sponsored retirement plans.

2001-2005: BAILOUT. Post Stock Market Crash Rate Cuts. Federal Reserve cuts US interest rates to 46-year lows to reflate US financial and real estate assets to protect financial sector.

2002

2003

2004: 44 percent of all US corporate profits now come from the financial sector; manufacturing now only ten percent.

2005: Personal bankruptcy filings exceed two million.

2005: Top one percent of households hold 1,120 times more wealth than the average American family.

2007: Subprime Mortgage Crisis. Massive decline in home prices following subprime lending and housing speculation.

2008: BAILOUT. Fed Rescues Banks Too Big to Fail. Large banks collapsed. Lehman Brothers bankrupted, but most banks bailed out by \$700 billion in TARP funds and \$3.8 trillion in Federal Reserve loans never publicly accounted for. Banks drastically tightened lending policies, despite support.

Barack Obama (Democrat) Takes Presidential Office

2010: Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; failed to reimplement elements of Glass-Steagall to limit size of banks to ensure adequate capitalization (to reduce highly leveraged speculation) or require robust regulation of derivatives, despite amendment of Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown to do so.

2011: Union Pushback Across Midwest. States faced fiscal crises, public unions came under heavy attack from conservative state legislatures that tried to drastically reduce the abilities of unions to collectively bargain. They argued that public unions were too powerful, and overly generous pension systems were too heavy a drain on state budgets.

Donald Trump (Republican) Takes Presidential Office

2017: Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act. Significant changes to individual income tax, estate tax. Individual changes expire after 2025, but business provisions permanent. Criticized for favoring billionaires/corporations.

2017: Senate Ends CFPB Consumer Arbitration Rule. Joint resolution nullifies a Consumer Finance Protection Board rule preventing companies from inserting arbitration clauses in customer contracts that block class-action lawsuits, stripping protections from consumers and supporting big business.

2019: Top one percent of households hold as much wealth as the upper and middle classes combined.

2020: US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Free trade agreement to replace NAFTA entered into force July 2020. Provisions allow US to file suit against Mexico for labor violations.

2020: BAILOUT. CARES Act Funds Firms Hit by COVID-19. \$454 billion with few limitations on how dollars can be spent. SBA found \$250 million in funds given to ineligible recipients and \$45.6 million in duplicate payments.

2003: Job Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act. Lowered taxes on income from dividends and capital gains.

2004: SEC lowers amount of capital investment banks must hold, increasing use of leverage in trading activities.

2005: Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act. Drastic restriction of consumers' ability to file for bankruptcy, heavily supported by financial sector.

2007-2009: Great Recession. Worst recession since the Great Depression. Nine million jobs lost (six percent of workforce). Household net worth declined by \$13 trillion, stock market plunged 40 percent, housing prices fell 20 percent, Automobile industry on the verge of bankruptcy, major weaknesses revealed in retail-based economy.

2010: Personal bankruptcy filings reach 1.54 million.

2010: Manufacturing sector accounts for 11.5 million jobs and nine percent of total US employment

2010: Median Net Worth Cut in Half. Median net worth for American families declined from \$118,600 (2007) to \$66,500 (2010), expanding the racial wealth gap, as Black and Hispanic households carry more wealth in their homes. Black households lost half of their wealth in the recession.

2012: Foreclosure Crisis Effects. Between 2007-2012, more than 12.5 million homes were foreclosed upon as a result of the Great Recession.

2016: Manufacturing Job Loss is Key Election Plank. After running a populist campaign, Trump received nearly 80 percent of electoral votes from the top 25 manufacturing states. However, Trump's policies did not stop offshoring or slow the erosion of America's manufacturing base.

2018: Rollback of Dodd-Frank Regulations. Even the modest protections from 2010 are reversed.

2018: CEO compensation in stock options averages 74 percent.

2020: 70 percent of new household wealth went to top 20 percent of earners; 30 percent went to the top one percent.

2020: Manufacturing sector accounts for 12 million jobs and eight percent of total US employment

2020-21: COVID-19 Global Pandemic. 650,000+ US deaths, 9.6 million workers left unemployed. The \$2.2 trillion CARES Act (largest stimulus in US history) provided \$500 billion in direct payments, \$260 billion in expanded unemployment.

2020

UNDERSTANDING MIDWESTERN SUBURBS

Demographically, more people live in the suburbs than ever before. These communities are also rapidly diversifying and have become a key geography in state and national elections. But our understanding of the suburbs, the differences between outer ring and inner ring, poor and wealthy, and their shifting views on issues is often superficial and boiled down to stereotypes of soccer moms or highly educated white collar workers. If we are to understand the suburbs, we must understand the context from which they emerge and how people who live there situate themselves.

Our sense of self, of community, of belonging; our views of government, of taxation; our sense of fairness, of what we have earned and our perception of who threatens to undermine those earnings; all these are shaped in the Midwest through the prism of pervasive segregation and accompanying metropolitan fragmentation.³⁹ Our suburbs have been defined by a set of exclusionary zoning practices that have perpetuated racial segregation, creating fierce resource competition among communities in which only a wealthy few truly enjoy the spoils – while the rest scramble for what is left, desperately trying to hold on to a sustainable tax base for effective schools and stable home values where they can park their life's savings.

The residential system of segregation constructed prior to the Fair Housing Act (racial covenants, whites-only mortgage subsidies and insurance, subsidized suburbanization, police indifference to white mob violence against Black families moving into white neighborhoods) persists in the contemporary development model of jurisdictionally fragmented suburban sprawl.⁴⁰ This system of residential development perpetuates and deepens racial inequality, but it requires neither overtly racist policy (e.g. redlining) nor racial animus to do so.⁴¹ Rather, there is an exclusionary logic built into it, a structural vestige of the overtly racist policies that first created metropolitan areas of fragmented suburbs that, combined with the profit interests of developers and sprawl-friendly state infrastructure policy, leaves each community with a rational incentive to exclude the poor while hoarding jobs and development for their own tax base.

Suburbs thus find themselves in a zero-sum fiscal competition where the winning communities are those with the means to maximize their share of high-income single-family homeowners and commercial tax contributions. Lack of comprehensive land-use policy allows developers to acquire cheap land on the metropolitan periphery, zone it exclusively for large lot, expensive single-family homes, attract lucrative commercial tax proceeds (malls and office parks catering to high-income residents) with new sewer and road infrastructure often subsidized by the state government. Multi-family housing, subsidized housing, and public transit are largely absent from these communities by design (e.g. via exclusionary zoning) since they do not boost their fiscal bottom line.⁴²

The remaining communities scramble to compete for what is left of the region's job and commercial tax base, and for residents with enough means to support a viable residential tax base. In other words, they compete to keep out the poor in order to keep up home values, which become especially critical to a community's fiscal viability as the prime commercial ratables are snatched up by the strongest and wealthiest communities. It becomes rational to practice exclusion, and in turn, the prospect of an influx of poor households becomes a looming fiscal threat.

The weaker such a community's tax base, the higher the tax rate it must levy to leverage the same revenue the wealthy winners leverage at a much lower rate.⁴³ In addition, many of the *non-winners* are older communities with aging infrastructure which they must maintain using their own tax base, whereas the state often subsidizes the new infrastructure of the winners.⁴⁴

This cycle is especially pernicious in regions like the industrial Midwest where population growth is flat or negative.⁴⁵ The region's proverbial *pie* isn't growing, but rather getting sliced ever more thinly, with a handful getting more than their fair share while the remainder compete over less. As one expert on regional equity remarked, "the rest of us become like rats fighting over the last piece of cheese."

This competition is racialized. The legacy of residential segregation is that a disproportionate number of African Americans and people of color are poor and reside in urban neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. The Fair Housing Act has opened up some of the suburbs to racial minorities by diminishing the most overt discrimination, but in practice this has meant that wealthier suburbs have been able to exclude those poor people of color's attempts to move by excluding affordable housing. The minority demand for housing outside the urban core effectively gets funneled into a handful of communities, many of which are fiscally weaker than the wealthy *winners*.

White people panicky at the prospect of diminishing home values in a community already fiscally precarious leave – if they can – fulfilling their own fears by marginalizing their communities' homes from the broader demands of the real estate market. The logic of sprawl doesn't rely on racial animus, but it often creates and perpetuates it by injecting precarity into all but the most advantageously positioned communities.⁴⁶

The result is that white people in the most diverse communities or proximate to segregated poverty are often politically reactionary – against taxes, against the poor, against minorities – when they face fiscal pressures and exposure to substantial levels of racialized poverty.

While the trend amongst these *winners* of the sprawl game might seem to indicate some level of political solidarity and even worldview agreement could exist in communities within transition. The reality is one more of racial polarization than unity stemming from the critical recognition that, unwittingly or not, these communities benefit from a logic and structure that does both substantive harm to other communities, and fosters precarity and racial animus.⁴⁷ This dynamic is particularly prevalent throughout the industrial Midwest, whose metropolitan areas are amongst the more fragmented in the nation.⁴⁸ In a context of deindustrialization and offshoring, the sprawl logic adds insult to injury as the strong poach employers from the weak by exploiting lax state rules on development incentives and tax credits.⁴⁹

The logic of suburban sprawl is a race to the bottom, with only a few elites as winners. People of color suffer the most, but many Midwestern white people find themselves caught in the middle. For a homeowner in a fiscally precarious community, the threat from an influx of poor families feels greater than the actual danger created by the elites who benefit from this perverse system of development: the real estate developer, the employer playing communities off each other for the best tax break, and the wealthy community that hoards the spoils of sprawl for itself and its own. It is a key node where race and class entangle, profoundly shaping the lives of a vast cross section of the Midwest, for the benefit of a select few.

Any strategy to organize suburban communities must name and grapple with the pervasive reality of segregation and suburban sprawl combined with slow population growth. It must name the true source of the precarity of these communities and of the persistent denial of equal opportunity to people of color, and reconstitute each community's sense of self and belonging to include those whom the current logic urges us to exclude.

Campaigns that promise to expand the reach of government and its impact on the lives of all Midwesterners fail to understand this logic and often stay stuck. We will continue to run aground on opposition to *new taxes* and *big government*, which are not simply philosophical objections but are rooted in the sense of scarcity, precarity, and a narrow, defensive sense of community that this current racialized sprawl system propagates.

For racialized sprawl is the context in which Midwesterners live; it is the system in which they invest their life savings, send their kids to school, and have the most direct interaction with government and taxes. It is the deep structure that shapes much of the rest of our politics.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MIDWEST

Opportunity and Challenge

The Midwest is a unique region with a set of conditions that shape the approach to organizing different constituencies while creating particular challenges and opportunities when working to bring people together across race and class for campaigns for racial, social, and economic change. In this report, we highlight four demographic trends we must unpack to understand the region.



Slower Population Growth

The demographic shift to a majority people of color population (to a *majority minority* America) is occurring in the Midwest but at a slower rate than the rest of the country due to overall slower growth rates and smaller immigrant populations.⁵⁰



Suburban Growth, Rural Decline

Populations are rapidly shifting across the Midwest from urban counties to suburban and exurban counties, creating increasingly diverse suburbs. At the same time, rural and small cities in the Midwest are losing population and becoming job deserts as small cities like Warren, Canton, Pontiac, Flint, and Youngstown lose a sole factory (if not their entire manufacturing base) and rural agricultural economies become dependent on multinational, factory farming operations.



High Segregation

Historical and accelerating patterns of racial segregation continue to foster unequal outcomes that shape how Midwesterners understand race.



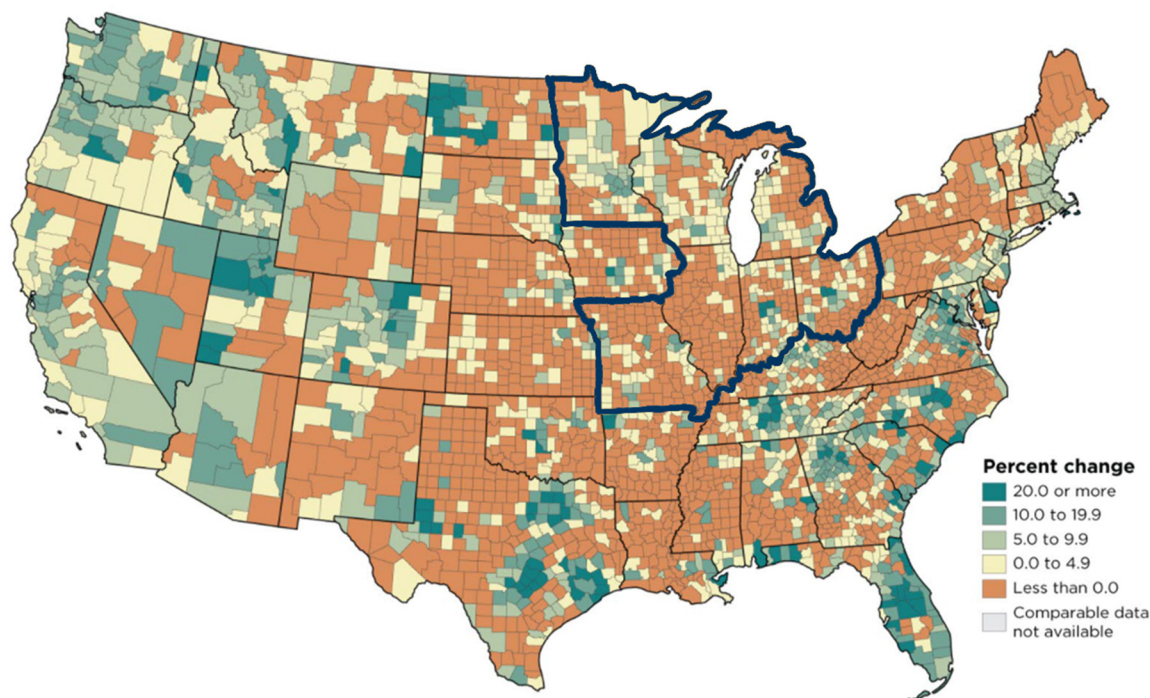
Aging Populations and a Care Economy

People in the Midwest are aging and that increasingly older population will drive demand for care workers, potentially creating a future service worker shortage in the region.

Covid-19 and the Midwest

The rise in 2020 of the Covid-19 global pandemic has wreaked havoc on both the national and global economy and has so far resulted in the deaths of more than 750,000 Americans. Viewed through a different lens, more than one in every 500 Americans has died of Covid-19,⁶⁵ deaths disproportionately Black and brown. The pandemic has increasingly highlighted the cost of a deep distrust in institutions both to our country and to the Midwest in particular, as news outlets and social networks promote conspiracy thinking, anti-mask and anti-vaccine ideology, and unproven cures, trends particularly pronounced in rural parts of the country. While important to note that the South and Mountain West have borne the brunt of the recent Delta variant surge, research shows that four Midwestern states (Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan) have endured surges, particularly in rural regions. Political control of the Midwest will not merely shape the economic vitality of the region, but also represent life or death risks for all Midwesterners depending on those who control the levers of government.

Fig 4: Population Change by US County, 2010-2020



More than half of all counties saw their population decline since 2010. The bulk of growth was in US metro areas (81 percent of which gained population). Only 48 percent of US micro areas grew over the decade; and faster-growing micro areas are adjacent to faster-growing metro areas, while slower-growing/declining micro areas are adjacent to slower-growing and declining metro areas. These trends are evident in our seven Midwest states, outlined here in dark blue.

Data and Map: US Census (2020)



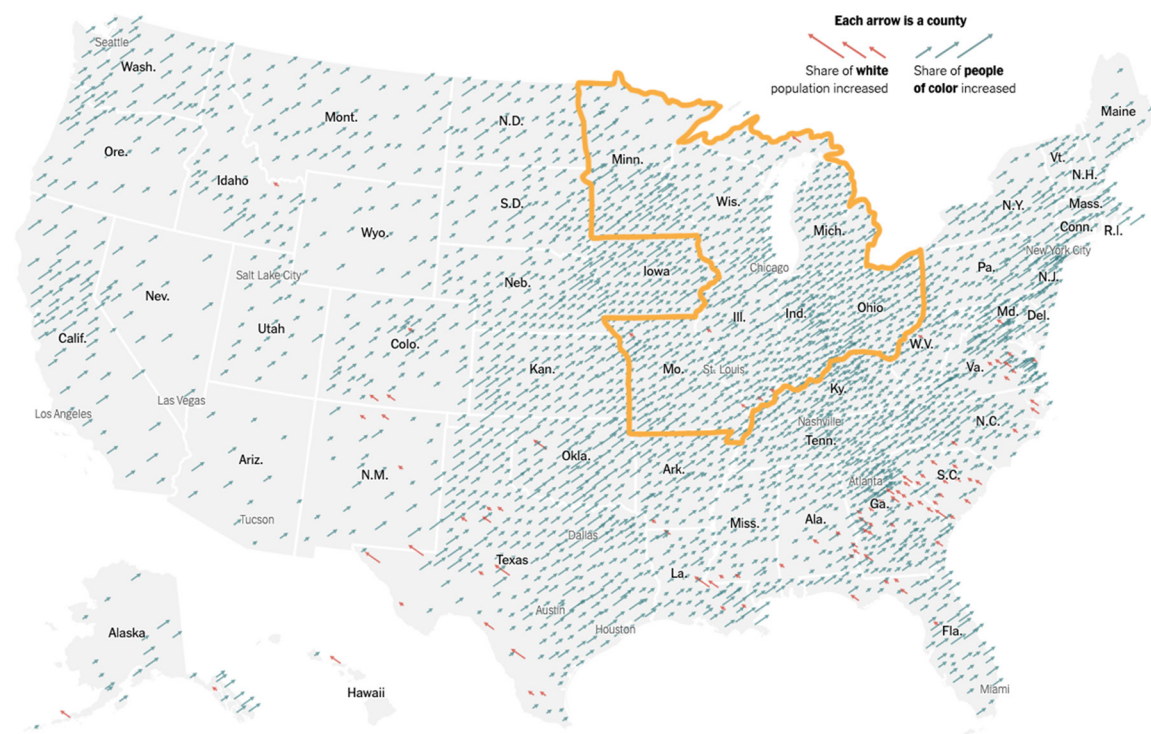
Trend: Slower Population Growth Resulting in Slower Demographic Change

Midwestern states, often with large anchor people of color populations in urban counties, are racially diversifying, but are on a much slower pace to become *majority minority* than many other parts of the country.

From the early to mid-twentieth century, Midwestern states sat at the center of the world's most robust manufacturing economy. Detroit was known as a global center of auto production, Akron as the global leader in rubber and tire production, and Chicago as the nation's largest producer of agricultural machinery. Multiple Midwestern cities, including Chicago, Gary, and Cleveland, were home to massive steel mill complexes producing millions of metric tons of product each year.⁵¹

This era of Industrial strength drew millions of Black families to the Midwest from the rural South as part of the Great Migration. Though manufacturing's economic engine began to slow by 1970, Black communities remained strongly rooted in the region's urban centers. According to the 2020 Census, over 7.7 million Americans who identify as Black (alone or in combination) live in the Midwest, representing 16.4 percent of the total US Black (alone or in combination) population; more than any other region in the country except the South.

Fig 5: Where the Racial Makeup of the US Shifted in the Last Decade



Only five counties in our study area experienced an increase in the share of white population since 2010. Notes: arrows show the percentage point change in the share of each group. White is non-Hispanic white.

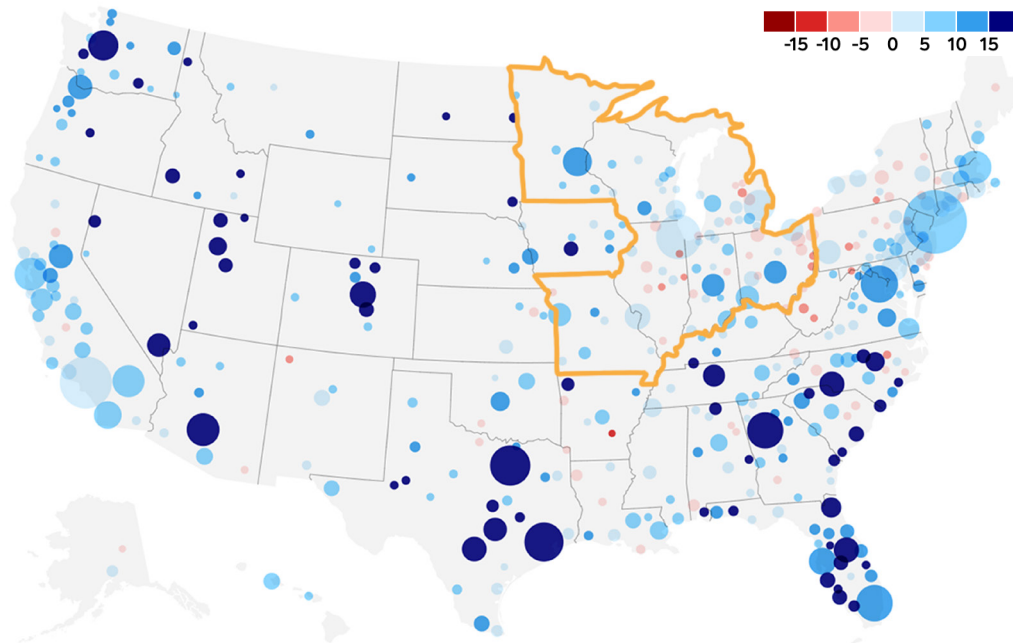
Map: Denise Lu, Charlie Smart, and Lazaro Gamio with the New York Times (2021)

While it is true that cities like Chicago, Columbus, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis have become home to growing immigrant and refugee communities over the past two decades, the vast majority of the Midwest remains overwhelmingly white.

Immigration is slowly transforming certain states (for example, immigrants accounted for 27 percent of Indiana's 2000-2015 population growth)⁵² but these populations have come to the Midwest in trickles compared to much of the rest of the country. This means that while people of color populations in the Midwest are growing, they will not fully transform the demographics of the region any time soon. With the exception of Minnesota, each state in our study has been growing slower than the nation as a whole – if at all – due to declining births and low migration rates.⁵³

The US Census projects the country will become *majority minority* by 2044, but this will not be the case in the Midwest for most states until 2060. Even by that year, Wisconsin is expected to remain 67 percent white, Missouri and Ohio 65 percent white, Minnesota and Indiana 61 percent white, and Michigan 59 percent white. Illinois is the only state in this report that is expected to have a white minority by 2060, at 43 percent of its population.⁵⁴

Fig 6: Population Change in US Metropolitan Areas, 2010-2020



Despite population gains in their suburbs, Midwestern metropolitan areas are faring worse than those in other regions. The proportion of small metro areas losing population is pronounced in the seven states outlined above.

*Map: Andy Kiersz,
Business Insider (2021)
Data: US Census (2020).*



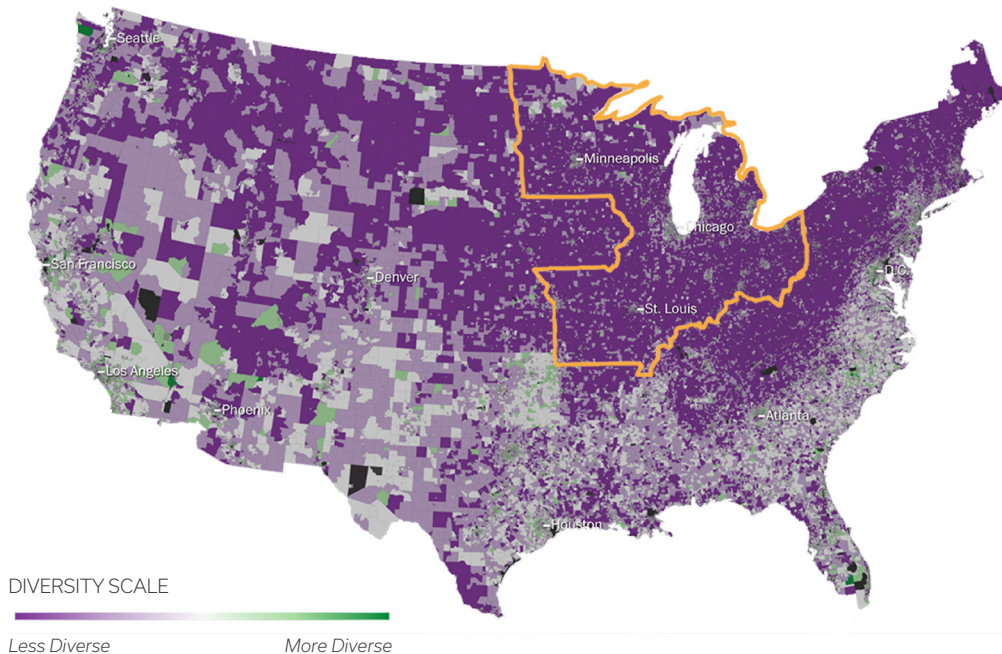
Trend: Suburban Growth, Rural Decline

Across all Midwest states since 2000, there have been large population shifts from urban to suburban counties, with suburbs becoming much more racially diverse in the process.

Midwestern states have the largest share of urban counties experiencing population loss in the US.⁵⁵ With very few exceptions – such as Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Jackson County (Kansas City), and Marion County (Indianapolis) – most urban areas in the Midwest continue to lose population to their surrounding suburban counties. Though historically thought of as affluent white spaces, Midwestern suburbs experienced dramatic shifts in population since 2000 (particularly inner ring suburbs), becoming more racially and economically diverse. One of the principal drivers of higher population in Midwestern suburban counties is domestic relocation, or people leaving urban or rural counties to settle in suburban counties. Black and immigrant families increasingly are moving to the suburbs to take advantage of a stronger job base and better schools, although in some cases these trends drive the consolidation and isolation of white people in more affluent suburban communities. While the shifting politics of Midwestern suburbs clearly articulate the challenges in this space, there are both benefits and risks (as noted above) related to increasing diversity in these communities.

Across the Midwest in formerly industrialized cities that have been unable to make the leap to a more diversified economy, the population that remains continues to struggle economically.⁵⁶ For example, in Flint, Michigan, median household income in 2019 was \$28,834 and the average home valued at \$29,500. Similarly, Youngstown, Ohio was once a booming industrial center of more than 180,000 people, but in 2019 had a population of just 65,469 and is now the second poorest city in America.⁵⁷

Fig 7: Racial Diversity and Residential Segregation by US County



Persistent segregation remains in nearly all Midwest counties, disproportionately affecting Black Americans due to the legacy of Reconstruction and Jim Crow housing policies; enduring racial preferences among whites who choose to live near other white people; and significant Latino and Asian immigration in other regions after fair housing laws were in place.

Map: Aaron Williams ,
Armand Emamdjomeh
for the Washington
Post (2018)



Trend: Racial Segregation

In contemporary societies, where violence and discrimination are either outlawed or otherwise verboten, segregation is the primary mechanism for controlling access to resources, spaces, and people. Segregation undergirds a vast array of resource disparities, tangible and intangible.⁵⁸

Deindustrialization and the Great Risk Shift exacerbated a deep racial divide in the Midwest. Historically, the major manufacturing cities in the Great Lakes region were not just segregated, but *hyper-segregated*. These cities include Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, St. Louis, Chicago, and Milwaukee.⁵⁹

Regions with higher levels of racial residential segregation have higher levels of political polarization... When segregation is greater, political gerrymandering – drawing political districts for political advantage – may be easier. By sorting people across space within a region, racial segregation makes voter suppression tactics easier at the same time that racial political polarization makes race a stronger predictor of political voting patterns.⁶⁶



Trend: Aging Populations and a Growing Care Economy

The US Census projects that the Midwest will grow more slowly and also that the average age of the population will increase over the next ten years.

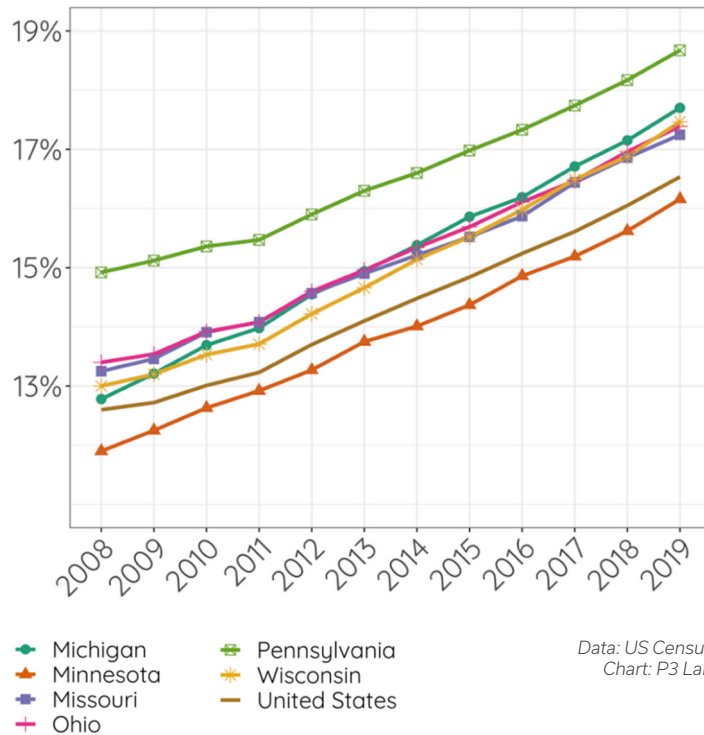
As the American populace continues to age and retire, it is projected that one in every five Americans will be 65 or older. By 2034, senior adults are projected to outnumber children for the first time in US history.⁶⁰

Paired with slow growth and declining birth rates, states in the Midwest have seen a steady outflow of young people as they seek economic opportunity in other parts of the country. This outflow creates unique policy challenges within each state and the region as a whole as communities are faced with reduced tax revenue and inadequate resources to support an aging population.

Just as where a zero sum competition among suburbs results in a winner take all reality, rural areas are also losing young people to the handful of strong market cities in the Midwest and elsewhere. This reinforces local economic stagnation where rural residents see an unending cycle of declining home values and business loss, which in turn leads to lower tax revenue for public services such as economic development, infrastructure improvements, and other vital aspects of any local economy. As local populations age, the need for care and service workers increases. However the flight of young workers, low pay in the *care economy*, and seniors who have little or nothing in the way of pensions or retirement accounts create a perfect storm for decline and loss.

While some may read these demographic trends as signs for despair, they highlight enormous organizing and development pathways that could create real economic opportunity and good paying jobs for young people. In the seven Midwest states we examine in this report, nearly 750,000 associate to graduate degrees are granted each year.⁶¹ While only 40 percent of Americans live near where they grew up, approximately 56 percent of young people are satisfied or very satisfied with where they live.⁶² The distance between these two statistics highlights how young people are all too often forced to relocate in pursuit of better jobs and career opportunities.

Fig 8: Population 65+ by State



Demographics Do Not Determine Destiny, They Shape Worldview

Immigration consistently rates as a high concern for people in areas that have experienced little immigration and have had minimal contact with immigrants. Fully 65 percent of rural white residents say American workers are being hurt by the growing number of immigrants working in the US, compared with about half of urban (48 percent) and suburban (52 percent) white residents.⁶³

So why do Midwestern rural white people feel more threatened by immigration, making them receptive to appeals like building a wall along the Mexican border? These beliefs make more sense when we understand the regional context and combined impact of deindustrialization and demographic trends of declining population in rural areas, slower racial change, hyper-segregation, and an aging population.

Demographics and economic trends are the foundation on which narratives are constructed. Two narratives have emerged about the collapse of America's industrial heartland.

One narrative hangs on three assertions: First, that industry left the US because unions destroyed productivity and made labor costs too high, thereby making us uncompetitive as a nation. Second, corporations were the victims of over-regulation and a bloated government that overtaxed them to pay for socialist welfare systems. Third, the growth of undocumented immigrants over the past three decades has resulted in *stealing* American jobs, increased competition for white workers, and depressed wages. Together, these three factors led to the collapse of manufacturing in the US. Sadly, this is a story that all too many Americans believe.

The alternate narrative, promoted as something of a neoliberal consensus, is that

the global economy shifted and the US is now in transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy. This story tacitly accepts the economic restructuring of the heartland as inevitable once China and other markets opened up. It does little to create opportunity or hope for the millions of Americans who live in small cities and towns in the Midwest.⁶⁴

The first narrative has been far more effective and pervasive because it acknowledges people's loss, their sense of being abandoned or wronged, and it lays out a clear set of enemies responsible: unions, government, and immigrants. The alternative narrative that the country is now in transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy does not do any of these things.

The true culprits for this transition are well articulated in this study. A new narrative is possible that both explains the transition and short circuits a racist blame machine. Midwesterners are resilient. They remain hopeful about their future and deeply proud of their history and the role their communities played in building this country. But we cannot gloss over the conditions of the region, or fail to name the people and corporations responsible for massive wealth stripping and lack of a visionary agenda to address our challenges.

The long-term demographic trends of the Midwest do not determine its future. They set the context and the framework for how we develop effective narratives, shape organizing strategy, and develop an agenda that is capable of confronting growing precarity in our region. In the wrong hands, these trends can be used to exploit a more vulnerable electorate. It is our task to acknowledge them and use them to present a visionary path forward that offers a set of real solutions to those who feel left behind.

UNDERSTANDING BLACK COMMUNITIES IN THE MIDWEST

That the Midwest has emerged as a key site of both racist policing and anti-racist activism may be surprising for Americans who imagine the region as white... more than seven million people who identify as Black reside in the Midwest, more than any other region except for the South.⁶⁷

The Midwest has long been an epicenter for both Black and brown political power and early civil rights breakthroughs in multiracial governance. In 1967, Carl Stokes was elected as the first Black big city mayor in the US, winning office in Cleveland (the tenth largest city in America at the time). Also in the 1960s, Black Panther leader Fred Hampton organized the Rainbow Coalition in Chicago, a multiracial alliance of organizations working to address poverty, anti-racism, corruption, police brutality, and substandard housing. In Michigan and Ohio, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee built powerful campaigns with migrant farmworkers that eventually brought Campbell Soup Company to its knees, winning better wages and working condition agreements with nearly every tomato and cucumber grower in the region. Leaders of color also played critical and defining roles in regional union organizing efforts, winning contracts across a broad range of industries from the 1960s through the 1980s.

This history is too often buried, forgotten, or dismissed. We argue that it is no coincidence that two of the events that have fueled the Black Lives Matter movement – the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota – took place in the

Midwest. The confluence of the largest presence of Black Americans outside the South in states that are vast majority white creates a uniquely contested political terrain that has laid the groundwork for Black leaders to build Black movements for political power, justice, and liberation.

The Great Migration from 1916 to 1970 saw six million Black people flee the violence and extortionate working conditions in the South, seeking better opportunity, jobs, and eventually political power in the Midwest and Northeast. Black communities in the Midwest are a critical constituency that we must continue to organize in order to ensure that local and state policies reflect the priorities of this vital community.

Fig 9: Black Population in Midwest, 2020

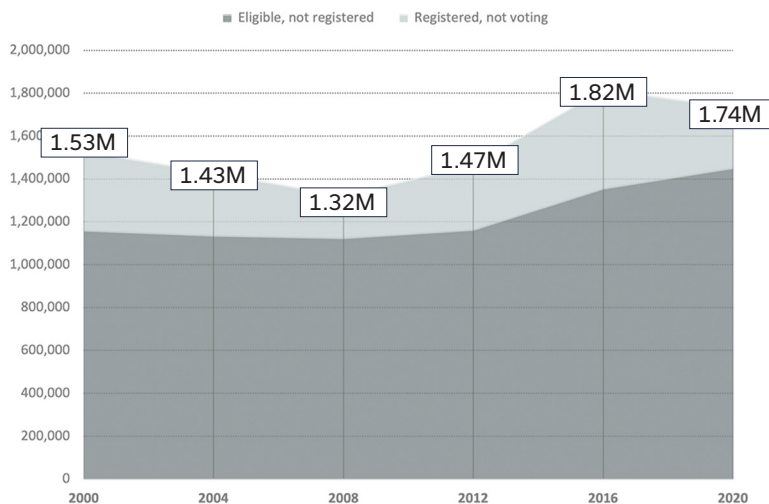
	Total Population	Black Population	% Black
Ohio	11,799,448	1,704,492	14.4
Michigan	10,077,331	1,544,122	15.3
Indiana	6,785,528	760,017	11.2
Illinois	12,812,508	1,992,213	15.5
Wisconsin	5,893,718	452,743	7.7
Minnesota	5,706,494	483,646	8.5
Missouri	6,154,913	798,623	13.0
Total	59,229,940	7,735,856	13.1

*Data: Black or African American Alone or In Combination, US Census
Chart: Community Building Strategies*

This graph represents the current population of individuals identifying as Black or African American (alone or in combination) in each Midwestern state and cumulatively across the region.

While Black communities are politically engaged, there is widespread sentiment among community leaders that little commitment to or investment in their communities has been made by local and state representatives – despite repeated promises. This lack of follow-through has bred despair and widespread disillusionment with the political process, often fed by active campaigns to discourage voter registration and participation by Black communities.

Fig 10: Black Votes Left on the Table, 2000-2020



Data: US Census; Chart: Community Building Strategies

This chart represents the sum of individuals identifying as Black or African American (alone or in combination) who either were eligible to vote and did not register, or who did register to vote but did not do so: i.e. votes left "on the table" across our seven Midwestern states.

Voter Suppression

The Midwest has seen systematic efforts by politicians to disenfranchise people of color in order to prevent them from voting on Election Day. Tactics include Voter ID bills, limits on early voting, mass purges of voting lists, and crack and pack gerrymandering strategies that predetermine the outcome of elections. The reality is clear: there are anti-democratic forces actively working to suppress people of color. The recent voter suppression laws passed in Arizona, Georgia, and Texas have rightly been called the *New Jim Crow* by US Representative James Clyburn and others. Yet

before these laws swept the South and Southwest, these and similar tactics were innovated, even birthed in the Midwest following election outcomes that left some groups unhappy.

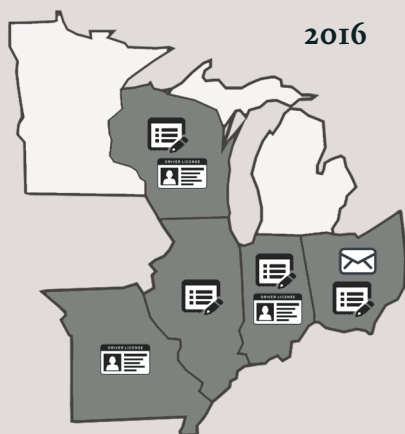
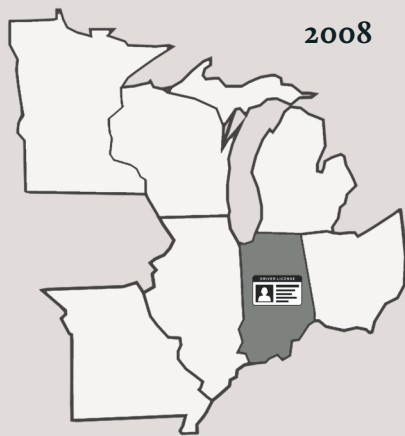
In addition to these voter suppression tactics, there has been a cycle-by-cycle effort by political parties to capture a structural advantage that permits ever increasing control. Control of the legislature – and in some parts of the Midwest all three branches of state government – enables gerrymandering, voter roll purges, and other voter restrictions. Yet for some, even these suppressive measures are not enough. In the past year, many states have sought to seize control of the election certification process. This would allow state legislatures to determine – and potentially change – the outcome of elections where they do not like the results by stripping those powers away from Secretaries of State or other non-partisan bodies. These actions are deeply anti-democratic and are meant to subvert the democratic process in an effort to hold on to power.

Despair and Disillusionment

All too many people of color stay on the sidelines because they lack fundamental faith that the democratic process will produce better outcomes for their families and communities. Structural

Every year, several hundred bills are initiated by state legislatures to restrict voting access. In many cases, these bills are only defeated at the ballot or by a Governor's veto, as with Minnesota's successful ballot initiative against an oppressive Voter ID bill in 2012.

Voter Suppression Laws Enacted in Midwest States 2006 through 2021



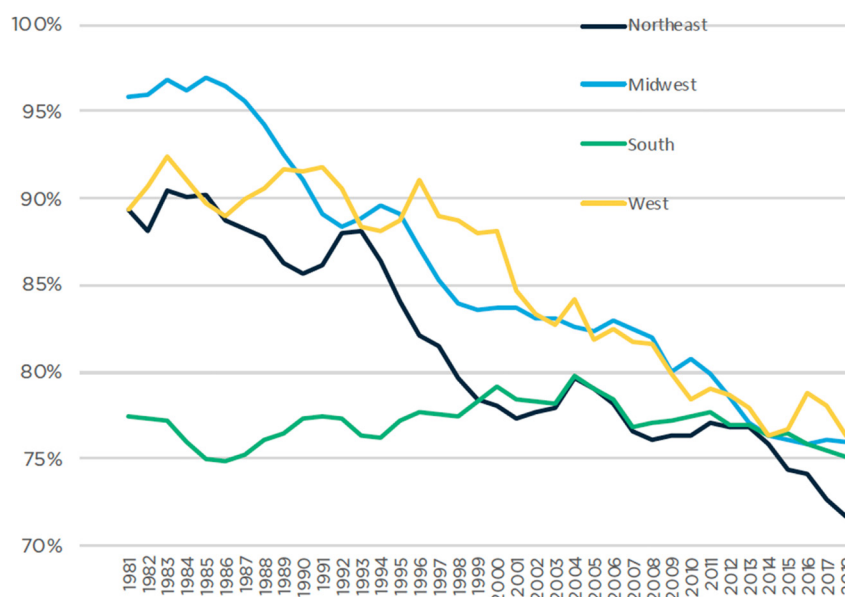
- 2006: Indiana**
Strict voter ID requirement (law)
- 2011: Illinois**
Voter registration drives curbed (law)
- 2012: Wisconsin**
Voter ID requirement (law)
- 2012: Wisconsin**
Residency requirement prior to voter registration extended (law)
- 2013: Federal**
Shelby v. Holder removes preclearance requirement for states to submit changes to their voting laws to the US Justice Department for review
- 2013: Indiana**
Proof of citizenship for certain individuals required to vote (law)
- 2014: Ohio**
Early voting period reduced (law)
- 2014: Ohio**
Golden Week same-day registration and voting period abolished (law)
- 2014: Ohio**
Absentee and provisional ballot rules restricted (law)
- 2016: Missouri**
Voter ID requirement (law)
- 2017: Indiana**
Aggressive voter purge requirements remove voters without notice (law)
- 2018: Wisconsin**
Early voting period limited (law)
- 2019: Indiana**
Deadline for submitting absentee ballot application reduced (law)
- 2021: Indiana**
Number, location, and availability of mail-in ballot drop boxes reduced (law)
- 2021: All States**
Legislation to restrict registration, tighten identification laws and limit the use of absentee and mail-in ballots

Data: Brennan Center for Justice; Maps: Community Building Strategies

racism fosters deep disparity and oppression on a daily basis in communities of color.

Black communities face the crushing Midwestern reality of deindustrialization and hyper-segregation, trends that dampen hope and optimism as Black communities face wave after wave of job and housing loss, poor quality schools, and so much more. In short, even after the election of our nation's first Black president in 2008, many Black people in the Midwest see more despair today than tangible improvements in their daily lives.

Fig II: Decline of Black Median Wages, 1979-2018



Data: American Community Survey, 2017; Chart: Policy Matters Ohio

This chart shows the decline in Black Median Wage as a share of White Median Wage. With the loss of unions and manufacturing jobs, Black wages went from near parity in the 1960s to just 75 percent of what white workers make today. In 1981, Black wages were 20 percent better in the Midwest than the South. Today, there is no difference between the regions as Black wages across the Midwest have fallen precipitously.

A critical example is the wave of housing crises that have unfolded in Black communities across the Midwest. The first wave began in the 1970s as deindustrialization unfolded: whites fled to the suburbs, resulting in population loss and its associated decline in older industrial cities (a trend well described in prior sections). This resulted in the precipitous drop of home values in those cities, which had a lopsided effect on Black working class families given that they had less mobility. Then during the more recent Great Recession in 2008, Black Midwesterners were both disproportionately foreclosed upon and lost more than half of their wealth because overall, Black families carry a larger share of wealth in their homes.⁶⁸

Deindustrialization was a traumatic restructuring of the economy for working class people across the Midwest. This trauma was exponential for people of color, adding to an existing backdrop of despair and hopelessness. For many white people, it sowed fertile soil for suspicions that fostered distorted populism. For many people of color, it left them feeling that democracy is fundamentally broken and that their participation does not matter, nor would it change any conditions that they face.

Black leaders increasingly view these declining investments and abandonment of their communities for what it is: no commitment to the issues that are most important to their families and future. It is impossible to build multiracial coalitions if Black leaders and organizations do not have the power and ability to advance their agenda – both on their own terms and as part of a negotiated governing coalition. On the whole, investments made in Black-led organizations that undertake long-term

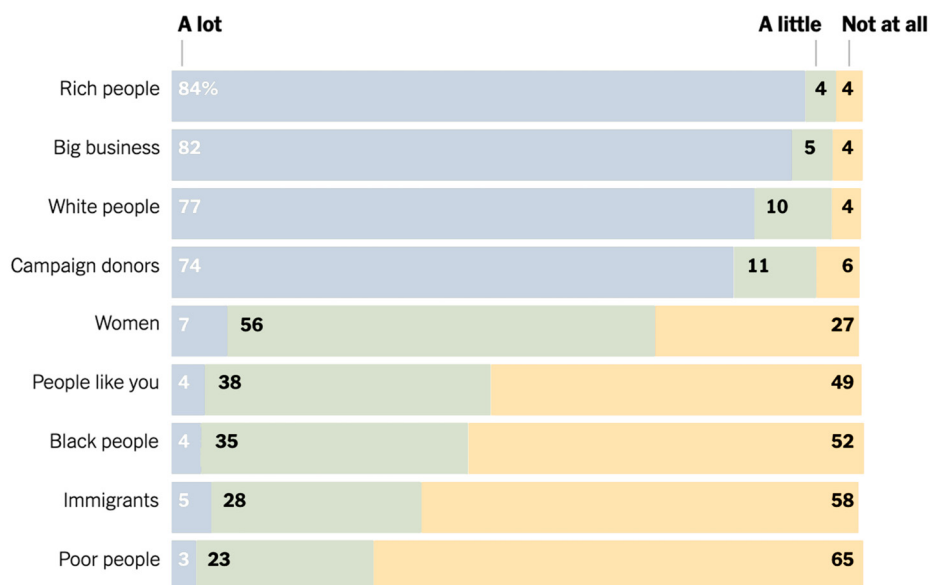
power building and year-round organizing is a marginal share of funding directed to the Midwest. Today, all too often to the extent that donors invest in *field* (i.e. grassroots organizing), they hire national vendors to carry out short-term canvassing operations in order to conduct targeted voter registration efforts. Given states' attempts to trim people of color from voter rolls, this strategy is useful, but is fighting an uphill battle without year-round organizing.

Research from Black Futures Lab shows a clear blueprint for an agenda that resonates with Black communities. As a part of its Black Census Project, 30,000 Black people were surveyed about their views and orientations towards issues. Perhaps most telling was how Black communities see the contrast between the priorities of politicians versus their own, as evidenced by the results in Figure 12 below.

We must make a fundamental shift to investments in state-based, Black-led organizations that are rooted in organizing and are already a component of state-based ecosystems undertaking the hard work necessary to build multiracial coalitions. Local Black leaders have a multigenerational commitment to their communities, as well as the relationships, vision, and tenacity to anchor their politics in a long-term, transformative agenda for their people.

Fig 12: How Black People See Politician's Priorities

Question: "How much do you think politicians care about the following groups?"
Ranked by most to least positive overall by percentage of respondents.



Data: Black Census Project (figures do not add up to 100 percent because about nine percent did not respond to each item listed here); Chart: New York Times

Organizing on the Ground: Detroit Action Education Fund

Detroit Action Education Fund works to build political power to empower leaders of Black and brown communities in metro Detroit and surrounding suburbs, transforming their neighborhoods and communities to “challenge the root cause of poverty, advance justice, and promote human development through neighborhood-driven community organizing and civic engagement.”⁶⁹ During the pandemic by necessity, Detroit Action Education Fund shifted away from its normal door-to-door approach, reinventing organizing in a time of physical and social distancing by engaging leaders individually as well as in major events by building power through Zoom meetings and Facebook live events. Detroit Action Education Fund believes deeply in value-centered organizing that elevates the talent and genius of Black and brown staff and leaders who embrace leaderful movements, champion multiple strategies for power, elevate intersectionality, interdependence, and radical love while demanding the abolition of the structures of mass incarceration and the *New Jim Crow* that upended the lives of millions of Black and Brown people. In 2020-2021, Detroit Action Education Fund:



- » Ended loopholes that exclude Black and brown voters. Through a close partnership with the Michigan Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist, Detroit Action Education Fund demanded and won compliance with and full implementation of 2018's Voter Bill of Rights (Proposition 3). This included closing loopholes that local jurisdictions all too often were using to prevent Black and brown voters from participating in 2020 elections.
- » Organized leaders in their community for full participation and a full count of Black and brown communities in metro Detroit as part of the 2020 Census.
- » Organized to demand accountability and justice from Wayne County Prosecutor Kim Worthy and the Detroit Police Department for the unsolved murders of Black and brown young people at the hands of the police and senseless community violence.

To increase the participation of Black and brown voters, Detroit Action Education Fund implemented deep canvassing and voter education programs that shaped the commitment, strength, and participation of their leaders. As Branden Synder, Executive Director, argues: Detroit Action Education Fund's work at the “intersection of culture, grassroots organizing, policy and politics [enables us] to not only reimagine our city, our state and country but to also reimagine the role of working-class people of color in our democracy and in our community.”

POLARIZATION, RACE, AND WHITE MIDWESTERNERS

When we participate in politics to solve a problem, we're participating transactionally. But when we participate in politics to express who we are, that's a signal that politics has become an identity.⁷⁰

For the foreseeable future, white residents of the Midwest will be the largest single population bloc by far. The common coastal lens on white Midwesterners is to paint a monolith of rural and suburban people determined to blame immigrants for their economic precarity, lost in the thrall of ethno-nationalist politics. The core argument is that organizing in majority white communities, particularly amongst leaders who are not already supportive of racial, economic, and social justice, requires pandering to racists, since "studies have now shown [these communities] are largely driven by racial resentment and anxiety about the country's demographic changes."⁷¹ But the assumption that organizing these communities requires pandering to their racism rests on an understanding of racism as inherent, fixed, and unchangeable; the idea that *racists just gonna be racist*.

But as dr. john powell, attorney and well-known scholar on structural racism, points out, this is to "insist on a simple notion of race and racism: either you are a racist, or you are not," whereas research shows that people are ambivalent and conflicted about race. The reality is that one can be more or less racist, depending on a host of contingent factors. As powell shares:

one can have and act on racial anxiety and bias in one situation and have and act on racial openness and fairness in the next. We now know [based on the evidence from neuroscience] that one can have inconsistent racial positions at both conscious and unconscious levels.⁷²

Significant numbers of white people in the Midwest have supported raising the minimum wage, ending gerrymandering, advancing LGBTQ issues, and protecting workers rights and collective bargaining. The Midwest is not simply a collection of intractable, irredeemable racist communities who do not support these issues. Indeed, we have witnessed significant and often transformational engagement with white Midwesterners that show us "most of us carry conflicting racial attitudes within ourselves" and that "this conflict can be organized to make either our biases or our egalitarian aspirations more salient."⁷³

Political outlook, worldview, and even polarized politics are not necessarily an expression of intrinsic, immutable racism. **Racism is organized**. The problem is that these conflicting racial attitudes have mostly been organized by anti-democratic forces,⁷⁴ which have effectively and ruthlessly primed and mobilized the unconscious biases of many white Midwesterners with little effective opposition by progressives. Dog whistle politics have indeed become identity and taken root in significant part because they were not effectively opposed.

An effective intervention must be grounded in an understanding of what made so many members of white or significantly white communities susceptible to racist appeals. And to be clear, we are not talking about all white Midwesterners, but a subset of people that is critical to the establishment of a sustainable multiracial coalition working for change.

In Jennifer Silva's book *We're Still Here: Pain and Politics In the Heart of America*, she interviews polarized and conflicted people from across the country. Silva asserts that what seems like incoherent views make sense when understood from the vantage point of personal life experience, which involves physical and emotional pain and trauma, personal betrayal, and institutional betrayal at all levels – including education, criminal justice, and government. In their attempt to find a sense of self, the individuals Silva interviewed weave narratives of overcoming pain to anchor their identities, engaging in solitary strategies of coping such as seeking out self help and self improvement, using drugs, or delving into conspiracy theories to explain and give coherence to their fractured experiences.

Their focus on individual perseverance over pain often leads white people to contradictory places, including anger and blame focused on those individuals whom they perceive as failing to overcome their own suffering. Silva notes that most of these people are apolitical and do not vote, but many hold both progressive and reactionary views. Silva notes that contemporary politics fundamentally fails to recognize their pain; hence they find no place in it for themselves.

Silva suggests that a new type of politics is necessary, a *therapeutic politics* where people can articulate and overcome their pain in solidarity with others, and in a way that recognizes that much of their pain is either a result of or exacerbated by unjust social and economic structures, rather than personal failure.

Organizing White Communities

Operatives fall into two dominant approaches to engaging white communities. The first approach is by operatives who advocate for pandering to white Midwesterners, building campaign strategies that avoid addressing race and argue that a moderate agenda focused on the middle class is the only path.

The second approach is shame-based, painting anyone who did or does support a set of particular issues as racist or even *deplorable*, in an attempt to stigmatize white communities about their choices and views. The second approach often takes the form of snap and harsh judgments of someone who violates the norms set by progressive activists.

Neither of these approaches leaves any space to lean into or address the conflicting views churning inside of white Midwesterners. Indeed, one approach fails to recognize that these conflicts exist; the other harshly judges individuals for having them.

If we want to organize effectively in the Midwest in the short- and long-term, we must abandon the traditional engagement approach that atomizes and castigates white Midwesterners, viewing them as individual consumers of politics.

The Damage of Despair and Shame

Psychologists and the self-help community, perhaps most notably Brene Brown, have addressed extensively the corrosive effects of deploying shame in relationships and in organizational culture.

Incidentally, it is no coincidence that certain groups infiltrate self-help spaces, targeting people with histories of trauma and betrayal, and mobilizing those experiences and accompanying feelings into political resentment.

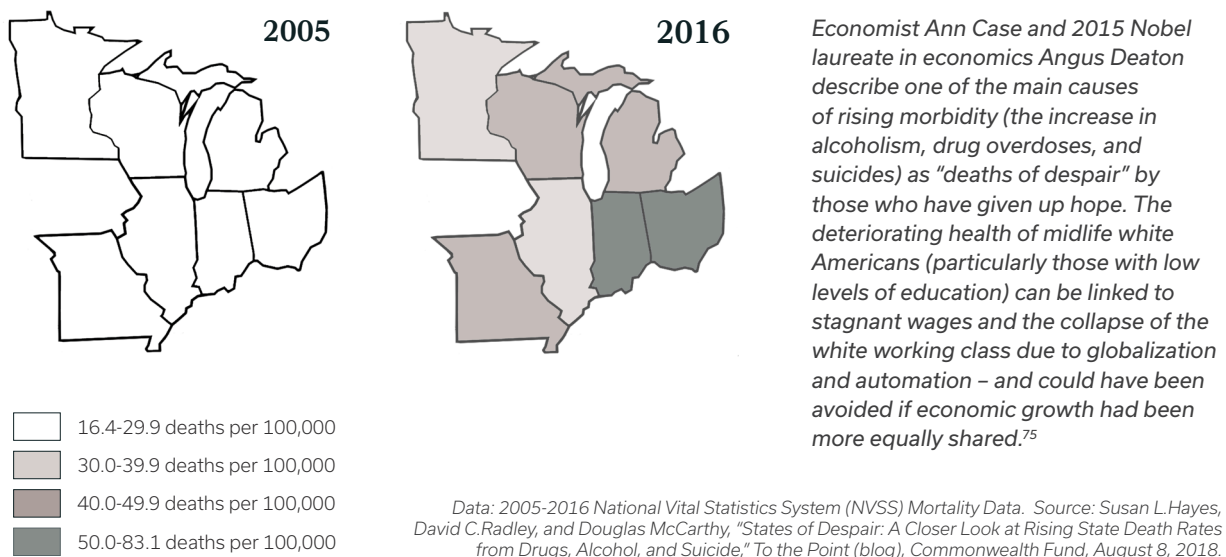
By mobilizing shame, we might gain catharsis and solidify our own in-group identity amongst core believers by championing moral superiority, but by doing so we unwittingly close our doors to potential adherents and aids anti-democratic extremist projects.

The strategy of *treating* these communities like a sick patient who has digested one too many Tucker Carlson shows on Fox News or Alex Jones conspiracy theories, and simply needs to be prescribed the right television advertisement does not and will not build multiracial coalitions for change.

A basic principle of organizing affirms that when we seek to engage people, we must “start where they are, not where we want them to be.” Many white communities are conflicted. Our approach must lean into understanding why that is the case, and what economic, demographic, and cultural trends are shaping that identity. This does not mean avoiding race, but addressing both race and class as a prerequisite for building multiracial coalitions.

The choice in front of us is to abandon the two dominant approaches to organizing white communities. We choose a third path, one that values and understands the critical importance of these communities as anchors of any emergent multiracial coalition, and one that builds the relational human capacity needed to move them toward openness and hope.

Fig 13: Indicators of Despair and Shame: Deaths from Drugs, Alcohol, or Suicide per 100,000 people in the Midwest, 2005-2016



IMMIGRANT & NATIVE COMMUNITIES

In more than 40 Midwestern cities, immigrants are a lifeline, bucking the pattern of population loss and revitalizing an aging workforce. In the last 15 years, immigrants accounted for 37 percent of the growth of Midwestern metropolitan areas — defined as a city and its surrounding suburbs. That's a significant contribution for a region that has experienced the slowest growth in the nation.⁷⁶

While the growth of immigrant communities is associated with large metropolitan areas, the influx of immigrants in small cities and rural towns in the Midwest has provided a vital lifeline. Immigrant workers are the foundation of industries such as the meat packing plants in Perham, Minnesota, the dairy and cheese operations in Fond Du Lac County, Wisconsin and the small but vibrant corn producing communities of western Ohio. In a 2018 article, *Revival and Opportunity: Immigrants in Rural America*, the American Prospect argues that:

- » In 78 percent of the rural places studied that experienced population decline, the decline would have been more pronounced if not for the growth of the foreign-born population.
- » In the 873 rural places that experienced population growth, more than one in five, or 21 percent, can attribute the entirety of population growth to immigrants.⁷⁷

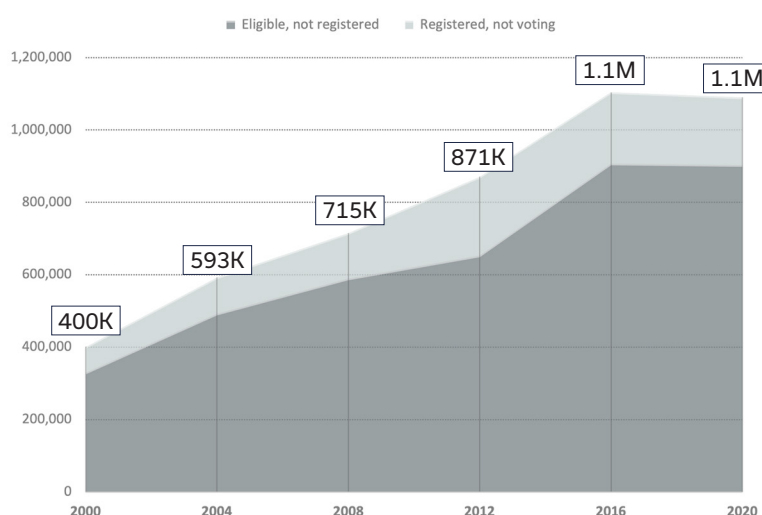
Yet a pronounced contradiction exists. While immigrants bring economic vitality and energy to the Midwest, some of the most virulently anti-immigrant politicians in the country are also from the region. Immigrants occupy central space in the false but nonetheless powerful economic narrative of precarity and decline in the Midwest and across the country, and are also elevated as a false

bogeyman undermining America's cultural identity and heritage.

While it is the case that immigrant and Native communities are comparatively small in the Midwest compared to other regions – with Illinois a fairly pronounced exception – they are an essential building block to multiracial coalitions at the state, as well as increasingly relevant and important to the economic vitality of the rural Midwest.

As Figure 14 and 15 detail, hundreds of thousands of eligible immigrant Midwesterners are not participating in elections. In order to increase

Fig 14: Hispanic Votes Left on the Table, 2000-2020



Data: US Census; Chart: Community Building Strategies

This chart represents the sum of individuals identifying as Hispanic (of any race) who either were eligible to vote and did not register, or who did register to vote but did not do so: i.e. votes left "on the table" across our seven Midwestern states.

participation, we must build tailored strategies including language-specific, targeted community or regional outreach to bring immigrant leaders into campaigns for stronger, more economically robust communities across the Midwest. With attacks targeting immigrants and immigrant communities as a core plank of an anti-democratic movement's strategy to generate racial resentment, we must engage immigrant communities and build cross race solidarity for an inclusive America.

The Midwest has also seen AAPI and Muslim populations boom, as well as growing engagement from these communities over the same time period. As Catalyst notes in its digest on the 2020 elections:

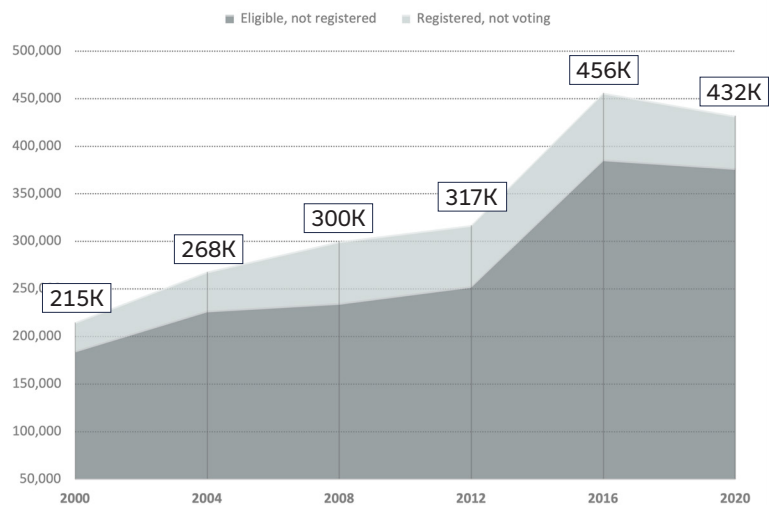
Even in a high turnout year, AAPI populations had a remarkable jump in turnout: the biggest increase among all groups by race. The number of AAPI engaged in the election increased 39 percent from 2016, reaching 62 percent overall turnout for this group.⁷⁸

The demographic growth of AAPI communities in the Midwest is particularly striking. A recent Pew Research study shows that "Asian Americans recorded the fastest population growth rate among all racial and ethnic groups in the United States between 2000 and 2019." In the Midwest, the states of Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio saw AAPI population growth of more than 100 percent.⁷⁹

Illinois has the largest concentration of Muslim Americans in the country, and Michigan the sixth largest concentration.⁸⁰ The Native American community (while a relatively small portion of the Midwest electorate) is nonetheless an important constituency.

The Midwest is home to a host of organizations that are working to build power and voice at the local, state, and national level, including the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (IL), Unidos MN, Michigan United, Voces de la Frontera (WI), Council on American Islamic Relations (MI), and Rising Voices of Asian Americans (MI) among others. Regionally, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights anchors the strongest work with immigrant communities in the Midwest – projecting power beyond state borders with their Executive Director, Lawrence Benito, former national co-chair of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (the nation's largest immigrant rights network).

Fig 15: AAPI Votes Left on the Table, 2000-2020



Data: US Census; Chart: Community Building Strategies

This chart represents the sum of individuals identifying as Asian American Pacific Islander who either were eligible to vote and did not register, or who did register to vote but did not do so: i.e. votes left "on the table" across our seven Midwestern states.

Organizing on the Ground: The Muslim Coalition of ISAIAH

The Muslim Coalition of ISAIAH represents over 20 mosques across Minnesota that are dedicated to racial and economic justice in the state through deep partnership and collaboration with ISAIAH (a statewide faith based organizing 501c3), elected officials, and the wider Minnesota community.

The Muslim community in Minnesota is growing rapidly and becoming an increasingly influential force in Minnesota's economic, social, and civic life. It is estimated that there are 150,000 Muslims in the state. One can see the vibrancy of Minnesota's Muslim community in the diverse ecosystem of vibrant Muslim institutions that have been built. There are 74 Islamic centers; eight food shelves, and three free clinics, open to all who are in need. There are three full-time schools and over 80 part-time, weekend schools; and countless small businesses and daycare centers. Muslims are living, working and praying in the Twin Cities metropolitan region and across greater Minnesota.

As the Muslim community grows, it is critical that Minnesota's political, economic and social systems work diligently to ensure that Muslims are welcomed and included into the political and social fabric of Minnesota. Although many Minnesotans have welcomed



the Muslim community to Minnesota, it is also true that a small, vocal group of elected officials and anti-Muslim activists have sown fear and mistrust by targeting Muslim communities across the state.

The Muslim Coalition has become a critical vehicle for their state's large Muslim population to flex its political power. It has worked on a wide range of community issues including trash collection, child care, and racial profiling. In 2020, this coalition launched a voter engagement program consisting of dozens of canvass teams, mostly volunteers. They built a community data project that developed a statewide contact list of Minnesota Muslims utilizing the Empower app. Data coordinators scavenged membership lists of mosques, Whatsapp and Facebook groups, petitions, and voter pledges. They created a 72,000-person list of Muslim voters which they then contacted at least six times over phone, via text, and at the doors. In the Somali precincts engaged through this program, there was a 20 percent increase in voter turnout from 2016.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MIDWEST

According to Census data, on average one in four youth across the Midwest is a young person of color – ranging from 16 percent in Iowa to 40 percent in Illinois. On the one hand, youth of color – many of whom have been systematically marginalized from civic life – have historically voted at lower rates than white youth. On the other hand, young people of color played a leading role in activism and political engagement throughout 2020, and racial justice was a motivating factor for many youth participating in elections.⁸¹

Young people are and must continue to be cultivated as an essential part of any multiracial coalition for change. We have seen a large increase in youth turnout across the Midwest, which has been well illustrated by the Center for Information Research & Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, showing large gains in youth engagement and voter participation from 2016 to 2020:

Fig 16: Youth Voter Turnout Varied Widely Across the Midwest, But Was Highest in Competitive Battleground States

State	2020 Voter Turnout (ages 18-29) ▼	2016 Voter Turnout (ages 18-29)	Change in Youth Voter Turnout 2016-2020	Vote by Mail Policy
Minnesota	65%	57%	+8	Voters had to request ballots
Iowa	55%	50%	+5	Sent ballot applications
Michigan	54%	42%	+12	Sent ballot applications
Nebraska	50%	41%	+9	Sent ballot applications
Ohio	49%	44%	+5	Sent ballot applications
Missouri	46%	42%	+4	Voters had to request ballots
Illinois	46%	42%	+4	Sent ballot applications
Kansas	45%	31%	+14	Voters had to request ballots
Indiana	42%	35%	+7	COVID-19 not a valid absentee reason
South Dakota	32%	31%	+1	Voters had to request ballots

Data: Center for Information Research & Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University

Organizing on the Ground: Ohio Student Association



The Ohio Student Association (OSA) was founded in the wake of the Occupy Wall Street movement's unleashing of movement creativity and imagination, with

thousands of occupations springing up virtually overnight, as well as the murder of Trayvon Martin which unleashed a wave of mass protests that quickly spread across the country. In Columbus, Ohio, a group of students who dreamed of universal access to higher education without the burden of debt; of equal access to quality K-12 education for all of Ohio's children; and of an end to the criminalization of Black and Brown youth came together to form OSA. These young people were inspired by the electricity of the mass mobilization moment in which they themselves were key leaders.

Since its founding, OSA has grown to eight grassroots campus chapters led by young people focused on building independent political power throughout Ohio. OSA brings together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future. Key strategies include grassroots organizing, leadership development, political education, training, nonviolent direct action, advocacy for progressive public policy, and cultural organizing.

Since 2012, OSA has trained hundreds of young leaders from across the state through their annual Fellowship for Community Change. OSA organized to demand justice for John Crawford III, who was murdered by police at a WalMart in Beavercreek, Ohio and became a national flashpoint in the #BlackLivesMatter movement. OSA has run civic engagement programs (registering more than 20,000 people in 2016), researched and distributed voter guides, and in 2018 helped to collect the second highest number of petition signatures in Ohio's history to put Issue 1 on the ballot. Issue 1 would have freed thousands by reducing 4th and 5th degree drug possession and helped thousands more by investing the savings into addiction treatment and support programs.

In 2020, OSA mobilized young voters like never before, distributing 265,000 voter guides, making relational organizing contact with 10,000 new and infrequent young voters, sending 1.2 million texts and calling 100,000 young voters in Ohio. In 2021, OSA was part of a victorious Fair School Funding campaign that won redistribution of Ohio resources to make public education more equitable. Cleveland Chapter members also began mobilization as part of the Citizens for a Safer Cleveland ballot initiative campaign, which seeks to implement a charter amendment that would mean fair, independent investigations with real accountability for officers who commit misconduct.

FIGHTING FOR HOPE

The way to win power is by organizing a multiracial coalition that leans into being multiracial, recognizing the biggest threat we face is intentional division, and the pragmatic way forward is building social solidarity.

Ian Haney-Lopez

The Path to Long-Term Power and Multiracial Governing Coalitions

We reject the transactional, helicopter approach to our communities. It does not work and must be discarded. Through innovation, organizing, and strategic campaigning, the Midwest has seen the emergence of independent power organizations, a flowering of movement ecosystems that are charting a new way forward. These organizations are building across race and class, engaging Black, white, immigrant, Native, and young people to knit together working multiracial coalitions.

Across the seven states we organize, we are building the leadership of individuals and institutions committed to become the vital building blocks of emergent multiracial governing coalitions. By creating and lifting countervailing worldviews and new narratives, we can combat a toxic anti-democratic narrative and defeat attempts by politicians using race and class as weapons to divide the people of our region.

While our approach to each state must be distinct and nuanced, there are broad lessons from recent campaigns that point to specific ways in which we should engage and unite distinct constituencies. To organize effectively, we must both uplift these lessons and triple down on existing state-based ecosystems.

The task in the Midwest is nothing less than the work of transformative politics, a politics that brings people together across race, class, and geography while creating a renewed majority to advance issues of racial, social, and economic justice across the region.

In order to take advantage of both the immediate and long term opportunities in the Midwest, we offer four priorities:

- INVEST** in strategic and independent Black, immigrant, and youth organizing
- ORGANIZE** conflicted white voters with new and proven strategies
- ADVANCE** a Race Class Narrative
- MOVE** nonpartisan civic engagement programs through independent state ecosystems

INVEST in strategic and independent Black, immigrant, and youth organizing

The lack of deep investment in Black civic engagement and in Black communities must be reversed. We must amplify, fund, and invest in the talent of Black organizers and Black leaders. While national operatives often claim that they want the energy, vision, and electoral participation of the Black Lives Matter movement, described as potentially the “the largest movement in history”⁸² by the *New York Times*, too often they don’t want the inconvenience or struggle needed to directly confront structural racism or directly engage the agenda that Black-led organizations advance.

If our goal is to increase Black and people of color voter registration and participation to historic levels, there is only one path to its realization: sustained, long-term investments in Black organizing. If we hope to turn the energy of the Black Lives Matter movement into durable political power, we must double down on investing in Black organizing in the Midwest.

This means investments in organizations like Detroit Action Education Fund (MI) and BLOC Education Fund (WI), which not only contact hundreds of thousands of people but execute year-round organizing on key issues for Black and brown communities. It means investing in groups like the The Khnemu Foundation Lighthouse Center in Cleveland, a community center that works with returning citizens to build out effective civic engagement programs. These and other engagement programs, including voter registration efforts in Black communities, must be combined with long-term political education, service centers, churches, and engagement with other key mediating community institutions.

If we are going to achieve previous levels of Black and people of color registration and participation, we must build a program at depth that involves deep and sustained organizing in Black and brown communities, including online and in-person training that addresses real despair and provides civic education on the basics of how government works.

We advocate for a five-year, \$50 million investment in Black, people of color, and women led organizations in seven targeted Midwestern states. That investment should include a regional strategy for immigrant organizing for the Midwest that engages the expertise, presence and reach of Midwest immigrant rights organizations and helps cultivate new or affiliated immigrant rights formations in key states where they are lacking.

ORGANIZE

conflicted white voters with new and proven strategies

We reject the two dominant approaches to mobilizing white communities: either pandering to them by engaging them in issues that avoid addressing race and arguing for a moderate agenda focused on the *middle class*; or developing a shame-based approach that paints anyone who does not support racial, economic, and social justice as racist or even *deplorable*, in an attempt to guilt trip white Midwesterners to support the issues about which we are concerned. With either of these approaches, there is no space to lean into or address the conflicting views churning inside these individuals. One approach fails to recognize that these conflicts exist; the other harshly judges individuals for having them.

We need to invest in organizing conflicted white people in suburbs, small towns, and rural communities year-round. This begins with expanded investments in faith-based organizing. One example of this is the deep work that ISAIAH and Faith in Minnesota have accomplished over the past ten years. While the ideological shift in some church communities (evangelical, conservative Catholic) may prevent or limit engagement, there are enormous opportunities in mainline Protestant churches, synagogues, and union halls for authentic, deep, and sustained engagement. In addition, we can accelerate investments in strategies like Undivided, an evangelical faith program that creates a "multiracial experiential journey in pursuit of racial solidarity and justice." This is a vital on-ramp to organizing and broader engagement

in communities where progressives do not typically engage, especially in the context of evangelical churches that are themselves increasingly diverse. Early research on Undivided and Crossroads Church in Cincinnati shows great potential for this approach.⁸³

Second, we must invest in rural and small town organizing. While it may not be possible to enlist a majority of people in a multiracial coalition in these geographies, it is also untenable to abandon swaths of our states, leaving residents subject to the divisive, anti-democratic agenda of politicians and parties who will engage. Successful rural organizing projects like Hoosier Action Education Fund (IN) and We the People (MI) are learning valuable lessons about approaches and methods to engage rural leaders.

Finally, we advocate for expanding the deep canvass approach. Deep canvass strategies involve authentic, transformative conversations and have shown potential on key issues like racial justice, immigrant rights, and LGBTQIA issues to shift worldview. These programs are not shallow knock-and-drag approaches to electoral organizing. Rather, they are conversations that accept people where they are at, ask a set of challenging questions, and create opportunities for new insight. An approach like People's Action Institute's deep canvassing can "meet the demographic, political, and cultural headwinds that progressives face in [Midwestern] states and rural areas and the challenges involved in building an enduring [progressive coalition]."⁸⁴

We must strategically organize conflicted white , small towns, and rural communities year-round, by making investments in state based organizations engaging in faith-based and rural organizing, as well as those utilizing a deep canvass approach.

ADVANCE

a Race Class Narrative

All too often, progressives are asked to keep issues of racial justice and economic well-being separate — or to remain silent about race at the risk of alienating the mythical middle we're told we must appease. But our research shows that the way to persuade the middle is to mobilize our supporters to relentless repetition. To do that requires that we speak effectively on issues of race and class. Moreover, we find that effective messaging on multiracial populism engages persuadable voters and acts as a critical response to the division and fear the opposition keeps peddling.⁸⁵

Anat Shenker Osorio

Developed through a collaboration between Ian Haney López, Heather McGhee, Anat Shenker-Osorio, Lake Research Partners, Brilliant Corners, SEIU, and Demos, the Race Class Narrative is an empirically-tested narrative on race and class that neutralizes the use of dog whistle racism to win on the issues we care about. The opposition regularly uses racial fear as a tool to exploit economic anxieties and turn people against one another, even when their economic interests are aligned, and turn them against a government that works for all. In doing so, they regularly scapegoat communities of color for problems that have been created by anti-democratic policies and corporations. Race Class Narrative messaging fights back against these attacks while building cross-racial solidarity and support for progressive issues.

In 2020, We Make the Future was created as the new implementation home for the Race Class Narrative. We Make the Future combines strategic communications and coalition building to develop a shared narrative that motivates a progressive base and persuades the middle. Working in partnership with researchers, content creators, labor, and community based organizations, We Make the Future aids in the implementation of messaging research by building the capacity of communicators, organizers, and spokespeople. We Make the Future is currently advancing three core pillars of their work in the Midwest.

We must invest in a Race Class Narrative that combines strategic communications and coalition building to develop a shared narrative that motivates our progressive base while persuading the middle.

- » Commissioning and helping conduct public opinion research;
- » Developing/building alignment at the national, state and local level; and
- » Implementing effective messaging.

Building from the successful Race Class Narrative model, We Make the Future is continuing to employ proven initiatives such as the Race Class Narrative Implementer Series that builds the skills of communicators and organizers. We Make the Future is providing technical assistance to partners based on the latest research, and continuing to work with Black leaders organizing in the Midwest to create and test media geared toward organizing Black audiences. They are also including an AAPI cohort in the wake of the increased attention on anti-Asian rhetoric and hate crimes that target Asian communities. We Make the Future's partners include ISAIAH (MN), We The People and Detroit Action Education Fund (MI), the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, SEIU, NEA, and All In Wisconsin.

MOVE

nonpartisan civic engagement programs through independent state ecosystems

Each Midwest state has a unique ecosystem of community organizations, donor tables, coordinating entities, labor unions, and initiatives focused on building strategic capacities. Most of this infrastructure did not exist ten to 15 years ago, and funders often steer away from direct investments in states because it is messy or they view it as too complicated. It is time to shift the way we fund

in states. The path to multiracial coalitions in the Midwest relies on shifting away from massive, misguided investments in national organizations to direct investments in states and the organizations embedded within them.

See state one pagers for more information about how to invest in these ecosystems.

We must make direct investments in state-based organizations reaching out to Black, white, immigrant, Native, and young communities at the doors and on the phones. We must commit to building long-term, multiracial coalitions across the Midwest.

Further Research Recommendations

This paper has been organized, funded and led by seasoned organizers, donors, and strategists in the Midwest. In it we offer new, more nuanced interpretations of the data from the past decade informed by our experience on the ground. We have offered recommendations for the future based on what is actually working in our cities and states. We seek to build a learning program for the coming years that invests in the leadership of Midwest organizers to commission our own research. We must disrupt the trend of coastal elites driving surface-level research in our states that does little to improve our programs or knowledge. Instead, we need to build the intellectual capital and research capacity needed in our region to improve the depth, reach, and scale of our organizing. To that end, our research agenda seeks to:

- » Learn how Black, immigrant, Muslim, AAPI, Native and young people understand their own public identities, relationships to government, and beliefs in democracy. We need to better understand each constituency to improve our organizing, and understand what values and beliefs they share in common as we build multiracial coalitions.
- » Research the best organizing strategies to engage Black, immigrant, Muslim, AAPI, Native, and white communities, to bring them into relationship with others like themselves and build new coalitions, while bridging across race to move coherent multiracial organizing strategies.
- » Learn how best to turn our organized bases into digital ambassadors to counteract strategic disinformation campaigns.
- » Build the capacity for community groups to conduct their own research. For less than the cost of a single focus group, local canvass work can generate significant learning about how individuals get their news, how they make decisions, and how they feel about the future of their communities.

Conclusion

The radical part of our approach is that we must fire on all cylinders and create deep, equal investment in distinct communities including Black, white, immigrant, Native, and young people.

Too many coastal operatives do not understand the Midwest. They either argue for sole focus on conflicted white communities or solely for base turnout strategies that engage white Midwesterners who self-identify as progressive in their worldview. That is a failed approach.

Short of a wrap-around strategy that involves relational organizing and deep conversation in person, by phone, and at the doors, we will simply not be able to hold the pain and the hopes of all of these communities together to create a transformative politics that can withstand a volatile environment. With our very democracy at stake, we must commit to this alternative path to building multiracial coalitions in each and every Midwest state.

FLIPPING THE FORMULA IN THE MIDWEST

Win the Midwest Strategy	Traditional Approach
Focuses on building multiracial coalitions	Focuses on organizing community by community, without building a broader movement
Invests directly into state-based organizing and coalition building	Mediates or channels investment in the Midwest through national entities and foundation special projects
Voter registration is a year-round component of long-term campaigns to secure voting rights for all	Invests in short-term pushes to register voters and increase democratic participation
Advances a Race Class Narrative	Messaging based on momentary polling around issues
Integrates digital and social networks to change worldview with day-to-day organizing	Digital programs are an extension of short-term voter treatment program
Centers on authentic organizing and engagement with distinct constituencies	Aims to treat different constituencies with national strategies, and little long-term commitment to communities
Funds long-term investments in women and people of color led organizations across the Midwest	Assumes that the base has no other place to go, and funds campaigns at the very last minute
Understands how hope and despair drive the region	Looks for the latest issues to message

ENDNOTES

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- 23 *Id.*
- 24 *Id.*
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31 Silva, *We're Still Here* at 160.

32 Silva, *We're Still Here*, at 16-17.

33 Silva, *supra* at 161-162 (emphasis added).

34 See Haney Lopez, Ian. *Dog Whistle Politics*

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38 *Id.*]

39 See John A. Powell, *Racing To Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society* (Indiana University, 2012) at 17, at 59-62, at 147-149 ("The way we organize our metropolitan areas, especially through persistent segregation, plays a large part in maintaining a racialized system of distributing benefits and burdens and provides the necessary space and boundaries for whiteness to continue to flourish.") and at 191 ("... modern discourse views segregation as problematic because it precludes certain individuals from having access to certain resources and opportunities. But the problem goes much deeper than that. Segregation goes to the very core of the constitution of the self and the other. It deprives the racialized self of access to resources and opportunities but also plays a determinative role in the way racialized groups are constituted and controls and justifies the image the dominant self has of the racial other." [emphasis added]).

40 See generally Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality* (Brookings, 2002); Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf & Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-first Century* (Kansas, 2001) and David Rusk, *Cities Without Suburbs* (2nd Edition) (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993, 1995) esp. at 27-38, discussing the interplay between metropolitan fragmentation and high levels of residential and school segregation.

41 This is not to say that current policies and decisions are not racially motivated, but only that even absent racial animus the logic of the sprawl system is exclusionary and produces racial inequality.

42 Orfield, *American Metropolitcs*, *supra*; Mollenkopf et al., *Place Matters*, *supra*; Greg LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging And The Myth of Job Creation* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005) at 143-146 on how competition for tax base fuels sprawl and exclusionary practices; on exclusionary zoning and efforts to combat it, see David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, & Larry A. Rosenthal, *Our Town: Race, Housing and the Soul of Suburbia* (Rutgers, 1997).

43 Orfield, *American Metropolitcs*, *supra* at 37-38.

44 Orfield, *American Metropolitcs*, *supra* at 36; need source for state infrastructure subsidies

45 LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam*, *supra* at 131, (noting that land consumption in the Midwest, where population growth is the slowest, was five times faster than population growth through the late-90s, and remarking that "[w]hen metro areas thin out, tax systems become unjust and inefficient.")

46 The Institute On Metropolitan Opportunity notes that only 3% of the Cincinnati region lives in areas with strong growth, while 37% live in an area undergoing strong abandonment or poverty concentration. This dynamic has fed massive white flight in each of Ohio's major metropolitan areas over the past two decades from these declining areas: in the Cincinnati metro area the white population in such areas has dropped by about 100,000; in Columbus by 20%, or 50,000; and in the Cleveland-Akron region white flight from declining communities has been massive, upwards of 212,000. See American Neighborhood Change in the 21st Century: Gentrification and Decline, <https://www.law.umn.edu/institute-metropolitan-opportunity/gentrification>, at 25 ("In a number of cities, the vast majority of people live in economically declining areas experiencing low-income concentration or abandonment, while virtually no one lives in economically expanding areas. In some cities, nearly half the population, or more, live in areas that have undergone low-income concentration, including Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis ... and Milwaukee.")

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