

WINNING THE MIDWEST

Disrupting Myths and Building
Multiracial Governing 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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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The battle for America's political future, even for democracy itself, will be contested, won, or lost in the Midwest. Too many progressives now instinctually write off a set of Midwestern states and view the region as tilting to the right: ceding key terrain to Republicans and focusing elsewhere. This is a mistake, not only because with the right investments in the next two to four political cycles can we win, but because victories in these states are an antidote to the rise of anti-democratic, right-wing populist forces at the national level. With Republicans doubling down on investments in the region, progressives are building out winning political strategies of our own. In the midst of long-term economic and demographic trends coupled with 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 governing coalitions in the Midwest; but only if we choose a radically different course, a new path forward.

This report argues for that new path 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 on the fundamental idea that politics happens in the context of community and belonging. Most importantly, that 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 identity. This has left white voters deeply conflicted and susceptible to the appeals of right-wing demagoguery. It has caused Black voters 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 voters is fundamental to developing a strategy that can bring them into a governing coalition.

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 in which to contest. This report confronts that and makes the case that distinct and far-reaching strategies with each constituency are necessary. 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 seven Midwestern states we examine in this report have an evenly split US Senate delegation and are also evenly split in terms of gubernatorial control. The region is teetering, and we have a narrow window that will require a different approach to effectively contest for power during the 2022 and 2024 electoral cycles. Neither Democrats nor Republicans can win the White House or the US Senate without significant traction in the Midwest.

This report attacks the myths about Midwestern voters, questions corresponding assumptions that have taken root about these voters, and challenges the flawed "solutions" peddled by regional and national political operatives. The first myth is that some Midwest states swung irreversibly to the right and that the region is being ceded to the Republicans despite narrow victories in 2018 and 2020.

The second myth is that Midwest states can be won either by engaging only people of color, or by frantically chasing white Obama/Trump voters. The third myth is that retail politics can work in the Midwest by "treating" white voters with messages about the economy and Black voters with messages about race, while ignoring Native, Latino, AAPI, and other voters. The fourth myth is that we can win Presidential, US Senate, or Gubernatorial races by dumping billions of dollars into paid advertisements each cycle, rather than building the human capacity to lead and govern.

We offer an alternative path. We look at white, Black, and emerging immigrant voters in a regional context and chart how hope and despair drive both volatility and shifts in participation. To definitively bring each of these voting groups into a multiracial governing coalition, we argue that a far deeper, more nuanced, and long-term approach to organizing is needed. We also argue that we must approach 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 the most effective way to engage voters, but that national operatives rarely have the patience or interest to practice.

We lay out a strategy for building multiracial governing coalitions and present an alternative approach. We advocate for "flipping the formula" away from a swing voter treatment plan 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 mobilization 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 is not today and was never lost. The political whipsaw in the region has been the product of a sophisticated conservative approach that cultivates suspicion, fear, and division to create electoral dominance. At fault also are shallow, transactional political operatives who fail to grasp, engage, and attract the votes necessary to truly build on the potential that exists: a vibrant multiracial and cross-class governing coalition committed to transforming the region and national politics.

A New Path Forward

The dominant national political strategy of sporadic, short-term, "parachute" approaches at the state level is a path of diminishing returns. The "treatment program" strategy atomizes voters, viewing them as random consumers of politics, and does not result in strong democratic institutions, transformative politics, or durable governing coalitions. This traditional approach is characterized by:

- » Focus on electing Democrats with little concern for accountability or governance following the election;
- » Priorities such as tactical scale and efficiency, absent a deep and long-term engagement with voters, which lends itself to tactics accelerated by late money dumps where a "field program" organizes brief canvassing bursts for two months every two to four years; and
- » Targeting, narrative, and strategy that are driven by DC-based technical experts, rather than embedded practitioners who actually live in the Midwest.

This strip-mining approach becomes less and less effective as voters revolt against its transactional, shallow nature that fails to account for their true interests and worldview. This approach is no antidote for a growing segment of voters who rely on social media feeds to shape their worldview, with white and Black voters in particular bearing the brunt of right-leaning propaganda machines.

This report argues for a new path 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 tapping into their hopes and vision for a better future. Our analysis is based on the fundamental idea that politics happens in the context of community and belonging. And most importantly, communities should own and benefit from the political power they build.

We draw inspiration from the success of this new path forward in other parts of the country as practiced and eloquently argued by Stacey Abrams and Lauren Groh-Wargo. In their opinion piece *How to Turn Your State Blue*, they explain their ten year plan to flip Georgia. The heart of their argument is that organizing must be the "soul" of the work:

This work takes time and investment in an electoral strategy that makes progress over time. But it also takes belief from the electorate you seek, one that is resilient when the wins don't materialize or when the other side recognizes and reacts regressively to your growing power. That is why organizing was and is the soul of how we operate every day. Our organizing centers, always, on everyday people dealing with deep wealth and income inequality and structural racism, with xenophobia and bigotry and, in the South, with some of the worst health and educational outcomes in America.³

Stacey Abrams is not just a national political figure, and Lauren Groh-Wargo not simply a political operative. They are transformational leaders who envisioned a new way forward. Their practical, lived success has built a new practice of politics and is being engaged by independent groups and holds promise for the Midwest. The principles of this approach are:



People are organized into political movements. 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 academic literature on political participation. In Ziad Munson's research on pro-life activists, he argues that the reasons commonly held for individuals 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, Munson found that anti-abortion beliefs are as often the result of activism, and the role of organized religion in the process of making activists is not 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.⁴

Munson's research draws out the distinction between a patient commitment built over time in relationship with others versus an issue mobilization approach. National operatives and many candidates believe 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 voters to participate in a campaign or election because those issues are in their self-interest. Munson's research shows how flawed that approach is.

People are organized into political movements through their relationships with others. Their worldviews are shaped through their participation. A top-down approach fails to grasp the everyday nature of politics or the ways in which worldview evolves: it does not build organization or capacity, let alone transform people. And when that approach fails, the operatives predictably defend themselves by complaining that people vote *against their self-interest* or are *apathetic*, when they never truly embraced an effort to 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 action. 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."⁵



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



Successful narratives 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.⁶

We can win the Midwest if we follow Abrams and Groh-Wargo's call for a new way forward, a new political practice. But we must shift from status quo, transactional politics to a new practice of politics that charts a patient and long-term strategy for building multiracial governing coalitions.

In its research, the P3 Lab 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 Faith in Indiana, ISAIAH (Minnesota), the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, We The People (Michigan), and Progress Now. But homegrown donor tables

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.

in every state driven by in-state donors are also vital, as are electoral coordinating tables like State Voices and America Votes. Sophisticated narrative and communication strategies developed with deep practice in and leadership from the region, such as the Race Class Narrative, have also been essential as key building blocks to contest for governing power.

The Political Context

Historically crucial swing states that once decided the outcomes of Presidential elections, such as Iowa and Ohio, are tilting red. The vaunted Blue Wall states of Michigan and Wisconsin propelled Donald Trump to the White House in 2016 and only swung narrowly for Biden in 2020. Nearly every Midwestern state has had either a divided or Republican controlled state legislature for the past decade. Missouri and Indiana once regularly elected Democratic Governors and US Senators, but have been buried in a sea of red for the past several cycles. These conditions would seem daunting, if one doesn't understand the long history and volatility of the region. These recent swings are not unique.

Political volatility across the Midwest is evident by statewide Democratic performance rising in the 1990s and 2000s, and then swinging back to more conservative margins over the past decade to levels of conservative support reminiscent of the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 1 (pages 10-11) is a time-series chart mapping Democratic margins of victories for Presidential, US Senatorial, and Gubernatorial races in each Midwest state, demonstrating their swing from red to blue and back again over the past 40 years.

These volatile, complicated, and somewhat counterintuitive sociodemographic dynamics have only accelerated over the past two years due to the economic and cultural strain of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted and done lasting damage across the Midwest.

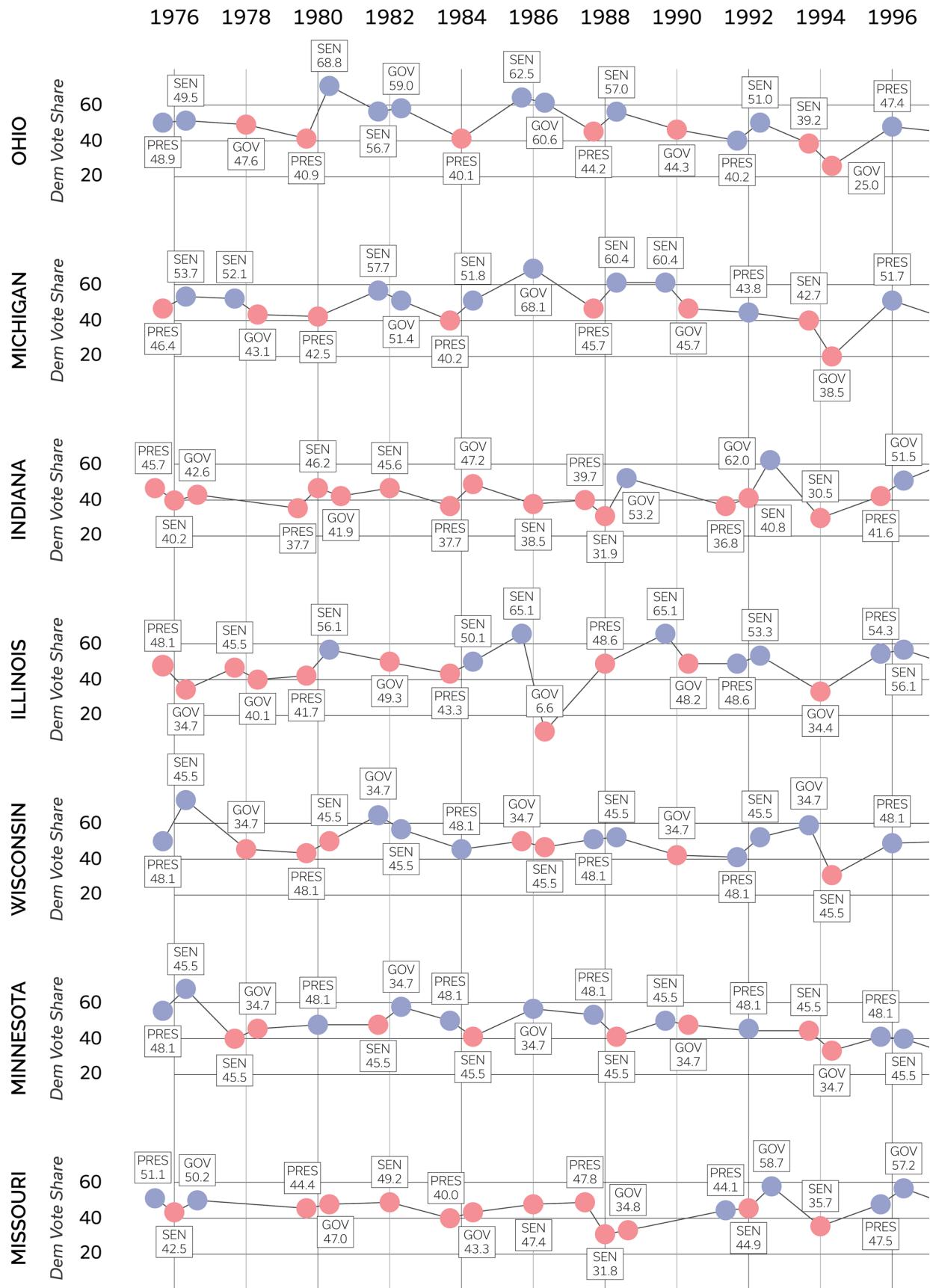
The impact of the pandemic has further destabilized the economies of many Midwestern cities that have still not rebounded from the 2008 financial crisis. In a USA Today article on cities that had not recovered from the economic recession a decade later, 21 of 28 are located in the Midwest, with the highest concentration in Michigan and Ohio.⁷

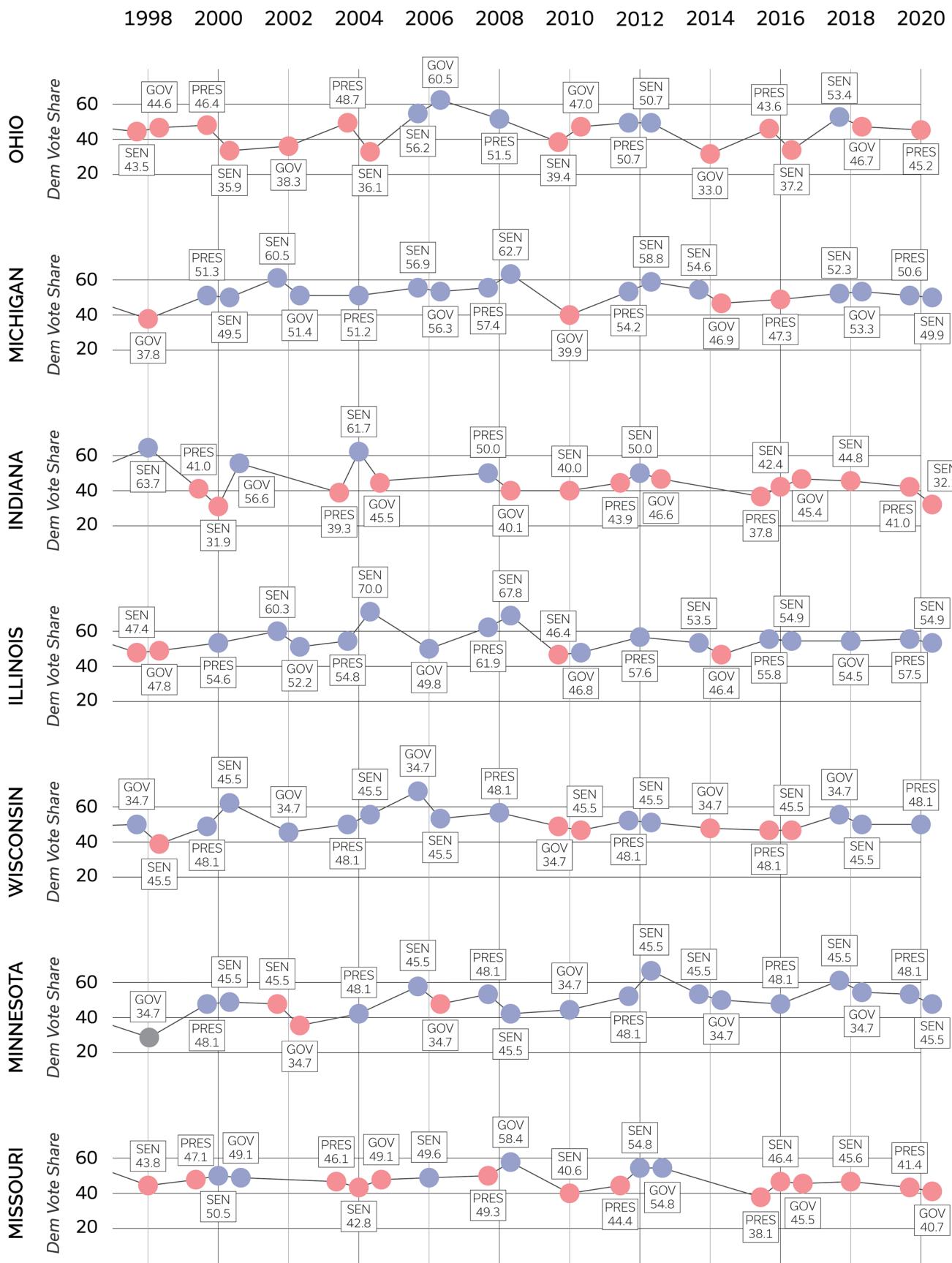
The pandemic is an ongoing crisis that will likely increase the pace and severity of political swings in the region. This volatility is the foundation for a defining fight for people's well-being and future – and progressives have the opportunity to win Midwest voters by showing that they can deliver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

The Midwest remains central to the political fortunes of any Presidential candidate as well as progressive ambitions to continue to control the US Senate. We cannot lose current Democratically held Senate seats in Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. And we cannot lose electoral votes held by Midwest states as we fight a wave of regressive, anti-democratic voter suppression laws now passed or in the process of being passed across the South/Southwest.

The volatile swings and recent rightward tilt in the Midwest have led national operatives to believe these states should be starved of investment or written off. On the contrary, statewide elections in the Midwest are being decided by narrow margins – tens of thousands of votes. This moment of volatility is the reason why we should be investing in the region, not a reason to dismiss it.

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





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, paired with loss of identity, have upended the lives of millions of Americans whose prosperous union jobs fell away – only to be replaced with economic volatility, downward mobility, and uncertainty. This 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 the effects of 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. The impact of this shift on Midwestern communities’ identity, culture, and politics defines the region.

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 manufacturing communities across the Midwest 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 (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*:

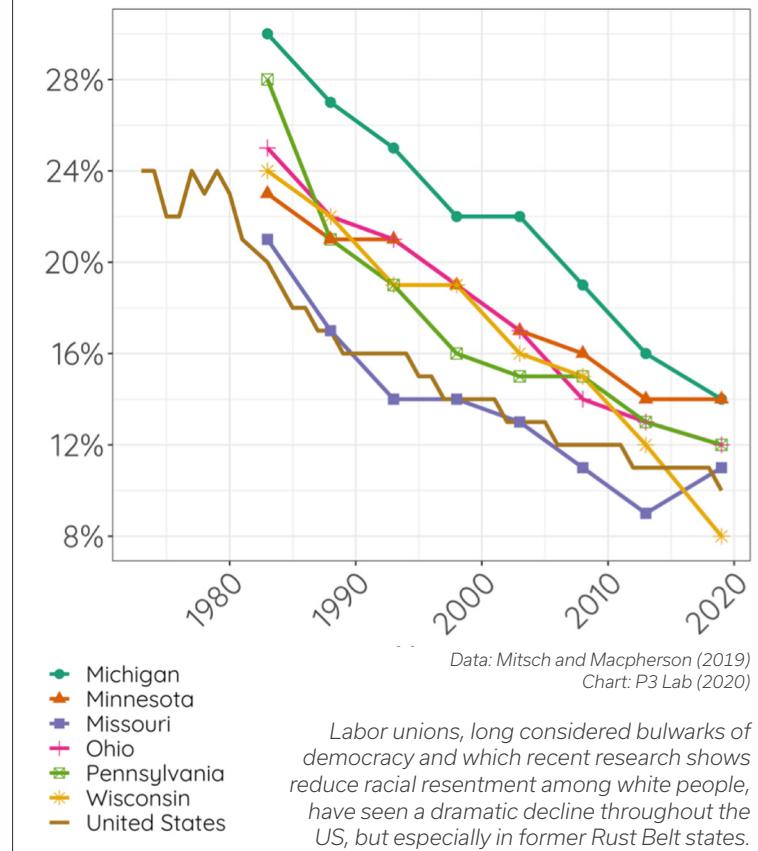
with no law capping interest, the evil is not only that banks prey on the poor (they have always done so) but that capital gushes out of manufacturing and into banking. When banks get 25 to 30 percent on credit cards, and 500 or more percent on payday loans, capital flees from honest pursuits like auto manufacturing.⁸

These changes created cyclical capital outflows from manufacturing, adding capital to a financial sector both here and around the world while enlarging trade deficits.⁹ 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 daily life in the Midwest, 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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

Fig 2: Decline in Union Membership
Dramatic decline across Midwest states, 1983-2019



\$68,354 in 2019, a 50 percent loss meant an income drop of over \$34,000.¹³ 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."*¹⁴

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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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

Fig 3: Midwest Wage Growth Worst in the Country

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

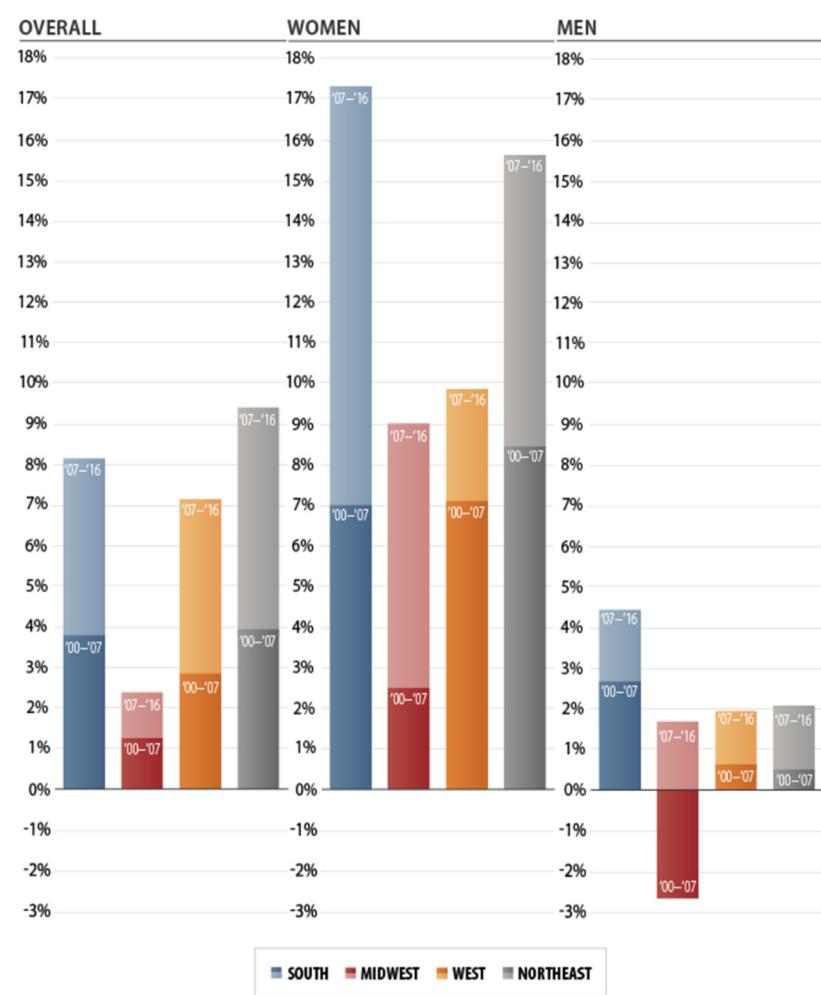


Chart: Center for American Progress, "The Midwestern Great Recession of 2001 and the Destruction of Good Jobs" (2017)³⁷

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.

1970s and 1980s, and since 1990 in adjacent Trumbull County almost 70 percent of the remaining manufacturing jobs were destroyed.¹⁹ Between 1990 and 2007, 800,000 manufacturing jobs were eliminated in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin.²⁰

In Monroe County, Ohio, where Obama won in 2008 with 53 percent of the vote, 99 percent of the manufacturing jobs that existed in 1990 have been destroyed. In 2020, Trump won the county with 77 percent of the vote.

This sort of destruction is harmful not only for the obvious hardships it causes families and their communities. The experience of such profound insecurity, volatility, and economic destruction by such a large segment of 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 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.²¹

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.

"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."²² 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.

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 "vote against their interests," while simultaneously arguing for the same stale, ineffective, and anemic strategies that have done little to reverse the decline.²³ This approach is deaf to what people in the Midwest experience on a day-to-day basis, leading voters to look for someone who hears their pain and speaks to their struggles,²⁴ even if that person is a right-wing demagogue.

This is exacerbated 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 – the Tea Party and eventually Trumpism. 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."²⁵

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, Trump built a movement that thrives on fear, jingoistic nationalism, birtherism, and racial anxiety. This movement exploits the vacuum left by Democrats' unwillingness to not only name but organize in opposition to and confront the true drivers behind the Great Risk Shift: the financial speculators, the private equity firms driving short-term profit schemes, and the politicians rewriting the rules to favor finance over manufacturing.

Trumpism 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 said:

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.²⁶

Trumpism is not just a product of racial anxiety, and it is not just a product of economic anxiety. It 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 made a direct appeal to those 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

Trump's Continued Assualts on Immigrants and People of Color Compound Feelings of Precarity

"We've been treated so unfairly by so many nations."³⁸

"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."³⁹



"Decades of record immigration have produced lower wages and higher unemployment for our citizens."⁴⁰

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.²⁷

Trump, like many demagogues of the right, 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.²⁸

Residents of the industrial Midwest rightly recognize that their suffering and hardship have been ignored. With few exceptions, the Democratic party has been far more sensitive to the needs of its donor class (the financial elites that have benefitted from, and substantially caused, the destruction of Midwestern manufacturing communities) than to the needs of voters in manufacturing communities.²⁹ But the members of these communities do not suffer equally,³⁰ and amidst racially segregated communities that have experienced the erosion of labor unions and other community institutions, they do not suffer in solidarity.³¹

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.³² 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 willpower 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.”³³ 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.³⁴

The absence of mediating institutions or recognition of pain by either party serves as dry tinder for racial demagoguery and dog whistle politics³⁵ keen on legitimizing white people’s suffering as the only legitimate suffering – as Trump signaled, “these are the forgotten men and women of our country.”³⁶ 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

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

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

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: Regan 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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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: CEO compensation in stock options averages 50 percent

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

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: 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.

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.

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

1999: Gramm-Leach-Billey 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

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

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.

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

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

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".

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. 725,000+ 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

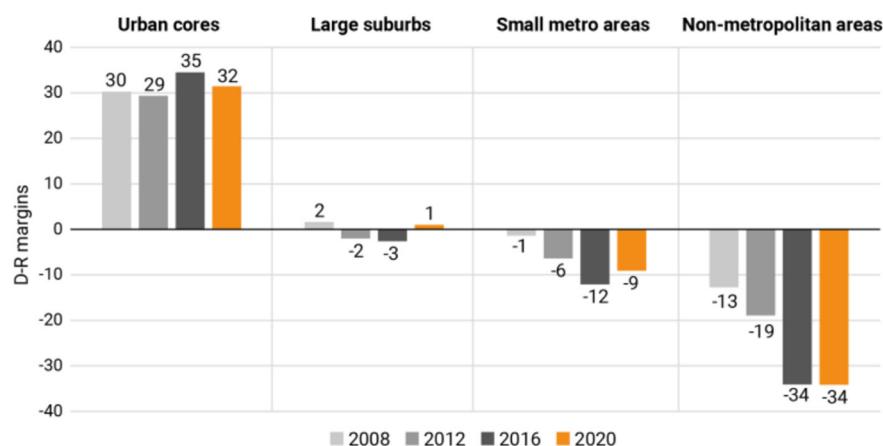
SHIFTING POLITICS IN MIDWESTERN SUBURBS

Michigan's swing from Trump to Biden had much to do with shifts in several suburban counties. In these counties, Trump's substantial seven point margin in 2016 changed to an almost even Democratic-Republican split in 2020. This, along with greater Democratic gains in urban cores and small metro areas, more than countered Trump's still large nonmetropolitan margins. The near erasure of Trump's 91,000 suburban vote lead from 2016 played an important part in his Michigan defeat.⁴¹

One of the topline assessments of both the 2018 and 2020 election cycles was that the election was "won" in suburbs when highly educated white voters flipped from Trump to Biden. The national narrative is that the Republicans are capturing the white working class and the Democrats are making gains with the moderate and more affluent suburban white voter. And while there is truth to this data in its most basic form, a closer examination illustrates how these shifts are less about the mythical moderate white voter and more about hope, despair, the impact of structural racism, and people's perception of their own precarity. In order to understand political volatility in the Midwest, we have to understand the complexity of race, place, and identity – and it is nowhere near as simple as is implied by the current national narrative.

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.⁴² Suburbs in these states have been defined by a set of exclusionary zoning practices that perpetuate racial segregation, creating fierce resource competition among suburbs in which only a few wealthy communities truly enjoy the spoils while the remainder scramble

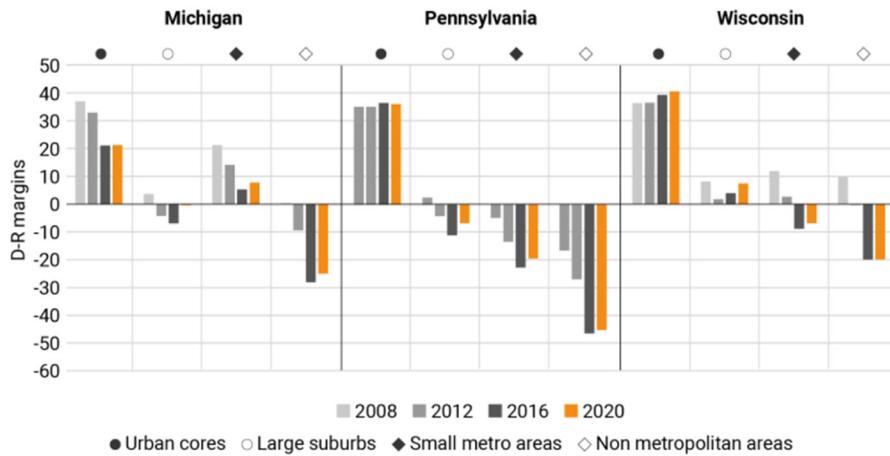
Fig 4: Democrat-Republican Vote Margins by Urban Status



Note: Urban status labels are based on a classification of counties developed by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. Urban Core Counties and Large Suburbs lie within the 100 largest Metropolitan Areas; other counties are classified as small metropolitan or nonmetropolitan.

Source: William H. Frey analysis of Dave Leip's Atlas of US Elections, accessed November 12, 2020; published by the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings

Fig 5: Democrat-Republican Vote Margins by Urban State



Note: Urban status labels are based on a classification of counties developed by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. Urban Core Counties and Large Suburbs lie within the 100 largest Metropolitan Areas; other counties are classified as small metropolitan or nonmetropolitan.

Source: William H. Frey analysis of Dave Leip's Atlas of US Elections, accessed November 12, 2020; published by the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings

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 established 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.⁴³ This contemporary system of residential development perpetuates and deepens racial inequality, but it requires neither overtly racist policy (i.e. redlining) nor racial animus to do so.⁴⁴ Rather, it has 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 and hoard 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, get it zoned exclusively for large lots and expensive single-family homes, attract lucrative commercial tax proceeds (malls and office parks that cater to high-income residents) with new sewer and road infrastructure often subsidized by the state. Multi-family housing, subsidized housing, and public transit are largely absent from these communities by design (i.e. exclusionary zoning) since they do not boost their fiscal bottom line.⁴⁵

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 becomes

especially critical to a community's fiscal viability as prime commercial ratables get snatched up by the strongest and wealthiest communities. It becomes rational to practice exclusion, and 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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ This cycle is pernicious in regions like the industrial Midwest, where population growth has often been flat or negative.⁴⁸ The region's proverbial "pie" isn't growing, but rather getting stretched thinner and thinner, with a handful getting more than their fair share while the remainder compete over less. As one regional equity expert 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 minorities by diminishing the most overt discrimination, but in practice this has meant that the wealthier suburbs have been able to exclude 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 who panic at the prospect of diminishing home values in a community already fiscally precarious tend to leave (if they can), fulfilling their own fears by marginalizing their communities' homes from the broader demands of the real estate market. The sprawl logic doesn't rely on racial animus, but

often it creates and perpetuates that animus by injecting precarity into all but the most advantageously positioned communities.⁴⁹

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.

For instance, while Colerain Township outside of Cincinnati is very diverse (almost 30 percent people of color⁵⁰), it went 60 percent for Trump in 2016.⁵¹ Trump seems to have run up huge margins among Colerain's white voters, winning many precincts with 70 or even 80 percent of the vote.⁵² An unavoidable part of Colerain's political context is that its schools, housing market, and tax base are precarious. Over ten percent of its population lives below the poverty line, 19 percent of its children live in poverty, and over 71 percent of the children in its schools are poor.⁵³ A majority of the students in Colerain's public schools are students of color.⁵⁴ Twenty-five percent of its housing stock is rental housing, its median home value is \$130,000 with almost a third of its homes worth not even \$100,000, while only 23.8 percent of its adult residents have a college degree.⁵⁵ Colerain primarily relies on its modest residential home values and aging strip mall properties for its tax base. In 2020 Colerain again went for Trump, albeit by 56 percent as Biden increased his absolute vote total over Clinton, most likely amongst voters of color.⁵⁶

Contrast Colerain with some of the "winners" in the Greater Cincinnati sprawl competition. Anderson, a similarly large suburb of tract houses, is 90 percent white with a median home value of \$240,000 – over \$100,000 more than Colerain's median value. Anderson has

little affordable housing, as only five percent of its homes are valued under \$100,000 and only 16 percent are rentals. Its school poverty rate is only 11 percent, and almost 59 percent of its adults have a college degree (more than twice the rate in Colerain).⁵⁷ While historically Republican, Anderson flipped from Trump in 2016 to Biden in 2020.⁵⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, it is not a community under fiscal stress or exposed to intense poverty.

Similarly, the suburb of Blue Ash is another sprawl winner, with an enormous cache of office parks and commercial ratables, median home values of \$284,700 (almost 20 percent of its housing stock is valued between \$500,000 and \$1 million), a poverty rate of just five percent, and a highly educated (56 percent) adult population.⁵⁹ Clinton won Blue Ash in 2016 with 53 percent of the vote, and Biden won in 2020 with 58 percent.⁶⁰ Blue Ash voters are exposed to very little poverty, and are able to leverage substantial public revenue with modest tax rates given their combination of modern office parks and employers and upper end housing stock.

While the moderate electoral trend amongst these "winners" of the sprawl game might seem hopeful and grounds for efforts to further engage voters there, it is critical to recognize 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.⁶¹ This dynamic is particularly prevalent throughout the Midwest, whose metropolitan areas are amongst the more fragmented in the nation.⁶² 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.⁶³

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 whites 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, in other words, a key node where race and class entangle in ways that profoundly shape the lives of a large cross section of the midwestern electorate, for the benefit of a select few.

Any political effort at progressive governance must name and grapple with this pervasive reality of segregation and suburban sprawl combined with slow population growth. It must name the names that are the true source of a community's precarity 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.⁶⁴

Our agenda cannot succeed if we fail to do so. We will continue to run aground on opposition to "new taxes" and "big government" that are not just philosophical objections but are rooted in the sense of scarcity, precarity, and the narrow, defensive sense of community that our current racialized sprawl system propagates. For the racialized space of sprawl is the context in which people 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

Despite a more diverse America as the recent 2020 census details, the proponents of a straight electoral strategy resting on the Rising American Electorate/New American Majority⁶⁵ look increasingly out of step with the more nuanced, complex, and evenly divided political reality of our country. The 2020 Census does show that 70 percent of fastest growing counties in the US have become more Democratic, but also that 90 percent of counties which lost population moved to the right. In a region experiencing slow growth, diversification will not determine political outcomes in the short- or mid-term. As a result, we must consider and unpack an additional set of demographic trends to understand the region and the emotional terrain influencing our politics.



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.⁶⁶



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.



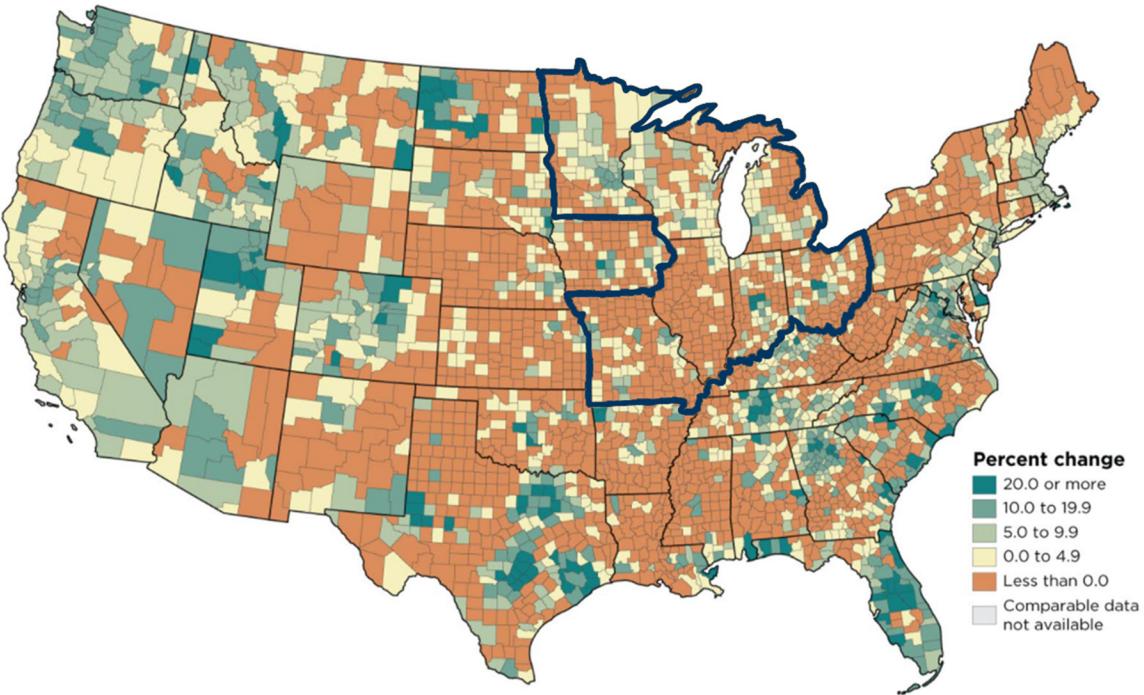
Aging Populations and a Care Economy

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

Covid-19 and the Midwest

The rise of the Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the national and global economy, and resulted in over 725,000 deaths (likely a significant undercount). The pandemic highlighted the cost of right-wing ideology to our country and to the Midwest in particular, as conservative news outlets and social networks promote conspiracy thinking, anti-mask behavior, and anti-vaccine ideology. These trends are particularly prevalent in parts of the country that support Trump. In fact, recent studies show vaccination rates to be significantly lower in counties with high levels of Trump support.⁸² And while important to note that the South and rural mountain West have borne the brunt of the Delta variant surge, research shows that four Midwestern states (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan) have endured surges particularly in rural regions.⁸³ Moving forward, political control in the Midwest will not merely shape the economic vitality of the region, but also represent life or death risks for all Midwesterners.

Fig 6: 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

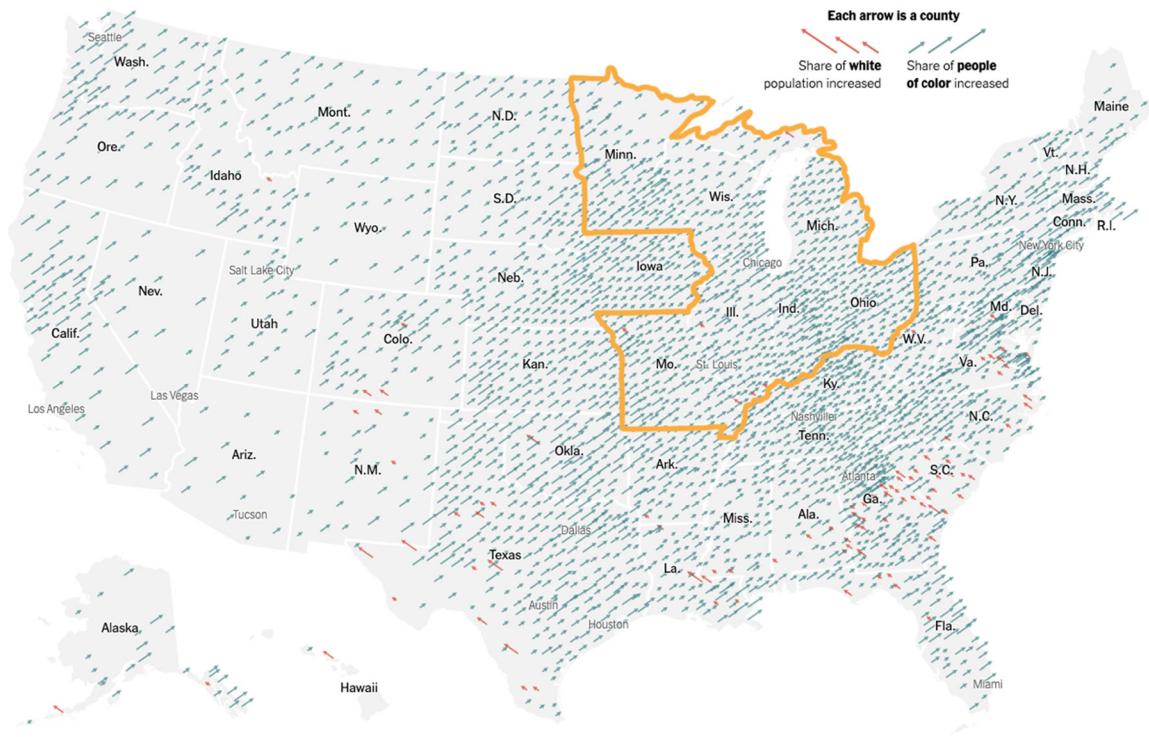


Midwestern states, often with large anchor people of color populations in urban counties, are racially diversifying, but are on a much slower pace to become "majority minority" than many other parts of the country.

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.⁶⁷

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 7: 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.

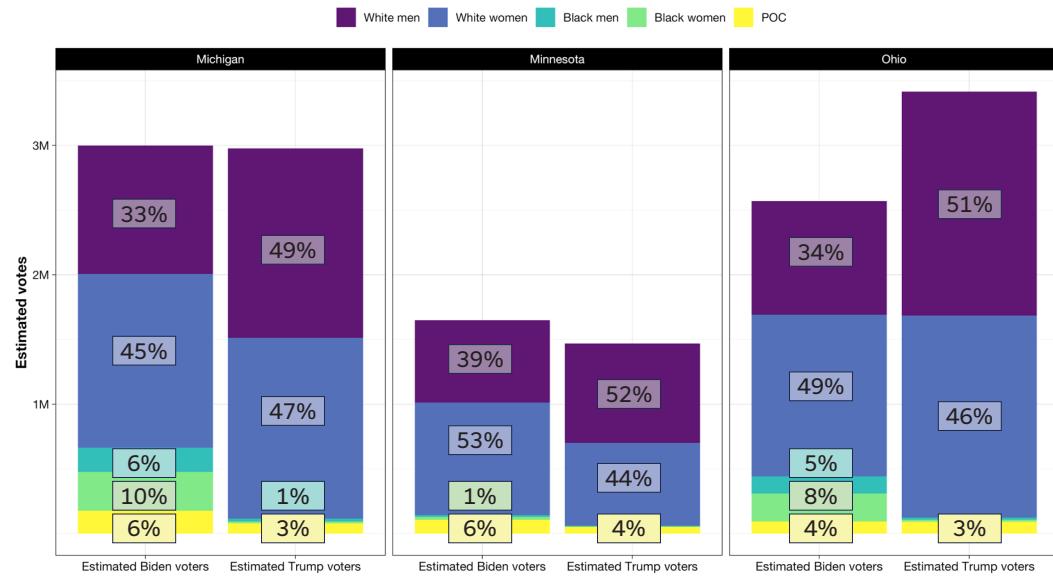
Map: Denise Lu, Charlie Smart, and Lazaro Gamio with the New York Times (2021)

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. As shown in Figure 8, this greatly impacts the populations who must be reached in order to support a multiracial governing coalition and elect progressive candidates in Midwestern states.

Immigration is slowly transforming certain states (for example, immigrants accounted for 27 percent of Indiana's 2000-2015 population growth)⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹

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.⁷⁰

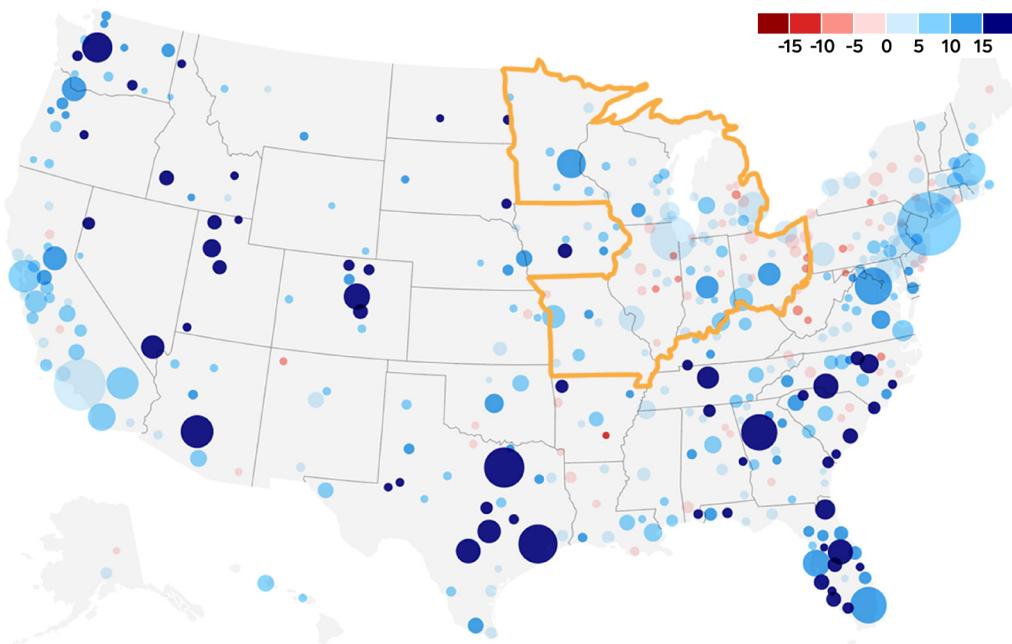
Fig 8: 2020 Voter Analysis, State Results by Candidate and Race



Notes: This analysis estimates Trump and Biden support by multiplying known 2020 voters from the voter file with exit poll data from CNN. As a result, it is subject to the known challenges with exit poll data, but nevertheless shows the complex multiracial electorate needed for progressives and Democrats to win statewide in the Midwest.

Chart: State Power Fund

Fig 9: 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.⁷¹ 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.⁷² 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.⁷³



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.⁷⁴

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.⁷⁵ Segregation has continued to worsen in these cities over the past 30 years. Indeed, the Midwest is the second most segregated region of the country and is home to five of the ten most segregated U.S. cities.⁷⁶

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.⁸⁴



Trend: Aging Populations and a Growing Care Economy

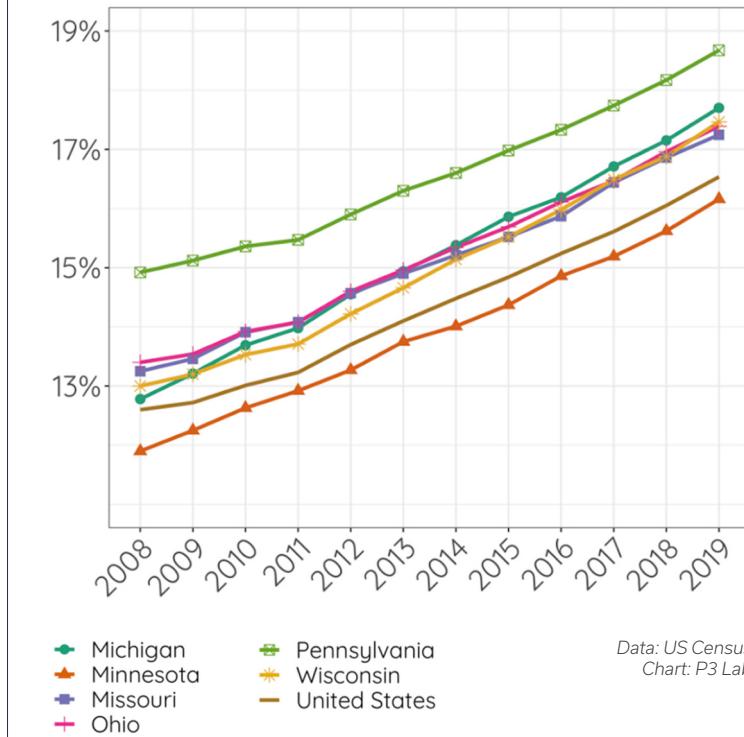
The US Census projects that the Midwest will grow more slowly and also that the average age of the population will increase over the next ten years.

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.⁷⁷

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 noted above 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 or other regions. 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 including 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 "caring economy," and seniors who have little or nothing in the way of pensions or retirement accounts create a perfect storm of decline and loss.

Fig 10: Population 65+ by State



Data: US Census
Chart: P3 Lab

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 states we examine in this report, nearly 750,000 associate to graduate degrees are granted each year.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.

Demographics Don't Determine Destiny, They Shape Worldview

Immigration consistently rates as a high concern for voters in areas that have experienced little immigration and have had minimal direct contact with immigrants. Fully 65 percent of rural white residents say American workers are 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.⁸⁰

So why do these individuals feel threatened by immigration while also being receptive to appeals such as building a wall along the Mexican border? This makes more sense when we understand the regional context and combined impact of deindustrialization and the demographic trends of declining population in rural areas, slower racial change, hypersegregation, and an aging population.

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

The first narrative has three parts. First, insisting that industry left the US because unions destroyed productivity and made labor costs too high, thereby making us uncompetitive as a nation. Next, claiming that corporations were victimized by overregulation and a bloated government that overtaxed them to pay for socialist welfare programs. And finally, asserting that the growth of undocumented immigrants over the past three decades has resulted in "stealing" American jobs, increasing competition for white workers, and depressing wages. Together, these factors led to the collapse of manufacturing in America. This, sadly, is a story that all too many Americans believe.

The alternate narrative, promoted by corporate Democrats, is that the global economy shifted and our country is now in transition from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy. This narrative tacitly accepts the economic restructuring of the heartland as inevitable, once China and other markets opened. It does little to create opportunity or hope for the millions of Americans who live in small cities and towns in the Midwest.⁸¹

The Right's narrative has been far more effective because it acknowledges people's loss and their sense of being abandoned or wronged. It also lays out a clear set of enemies responsible: unions, government, and immigrants. The status quo Democratic narrative does not do any of things. The true culprits for this transition are well articulated in the Hope, Despair, and Precarity in the Midwest section above.

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

The long-term demographic trends of the Midwest do not determine its future. They set the context for how we develop effective narratives, shape organizing strategy, and develop an agenda that is capable of confronting growing precarity.

In the hands of the Right, these trends can be used to exploit a more vulnerable electorate. Our task is to acknowledge these trends and present a visionary path forward, offering a set of real solutions to people who feel left behind.

UNDERSTANDING BLACK VOTERS 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.

Ashley Howard⁸⁵

The Midwest has long been an epicenter for both Black and Brown political power and early civil rights breakthroughs in multiracial governance. Carl Stokes was elected as the first Black big city mayor in the US, winning office in 1967 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 – campaigns that eventually brought Campbell's soup 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 a vast majority white, creates a uniquely contested political terrain laying the groundwork for Black leaders who have built 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 to seek better opportunity, jobs, and eventually political power in the Midwest and Northeast.

Black voters make up the vast majority of voters of color in the Midwest, and are a critical voting bloc without whom Democrats cannot win statewide office.

Fig II: 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.

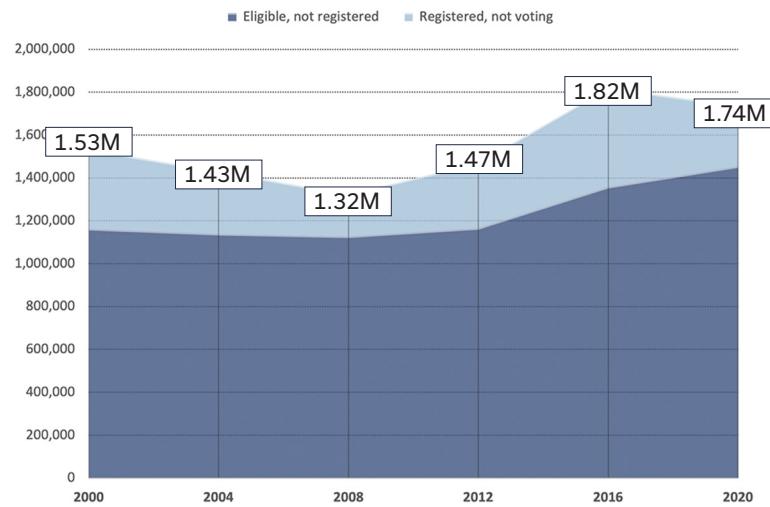
Black turnout in 2008 and 2012 played a large role in propelling Barack Obama to the presidency when he nearly swept the region winning Illinois, Indiana (2008), Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin while narrowly losing Indiana in 2012 and Missouri both times (by only 3,000 votes in 2008). Black voters in the Midwest are ideologically diverse like any other group, with older Black voters often connected to the Black church willing to support more moderate and mainstream candidates, while younger Black voters are inclined to embrace more progressive candidates.⁸⁶

The 2008 and 2012 elections were a high water mark for Black turnout to elect and then re-elect our country's first Black President. Black turnout in both 2008 and 2012 reminds us even today that we are leaving hundreds of thousands of votes on the table because voters of color are staying on the sidelines. Why have Black voter participation rates trended lower in the past two Presidential cycles? Two factors clearly play a role: active voter suppression and an environment of disillusionment and despair.

Voter Suppression

Republicans and conservative politicians on the right have worked systematically to disenfranchise voters of color to prevent them from voting on Election Day. While tactics vary from Voter ID bills to 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: right wing forces are trying to suppress voters of color. Recent voter suppression laws passed in Arizona, Georgia, and Texas (enabled by a conservative Supreme Court) have rightly been

Fig 12: 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.

called the "New Jim Crow" by Representative James Clyburn (D-SC) and others. Yet before these laws swept the South and Southwest, these tactics were innovated in the Midwest following Obama's sweeping victory here.

As Republicans and conservatives have implemented their voter suppression tactics, they also gather, cycle by cycle, a structural advantage that allows ever greater 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 many on the Right, even these suppressive measures are not enough. In the past year, many states under conservative control have sought to seize control of the election certification process to determine the outcome and change that very outcome (if they do not like the results) by stripping those powers away from Secretaries of State or other non-partisan bodies. The Republican Party is now advancing a deeply anti-democratic agenda on multiple fronts to continue to hold on to power.

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.



Registration legislation passed & enacted
 Voter ID legislation passed & enacted

Absentee/Mail ballot leg passed & enacted
 Restrictive voting legislation introduced

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

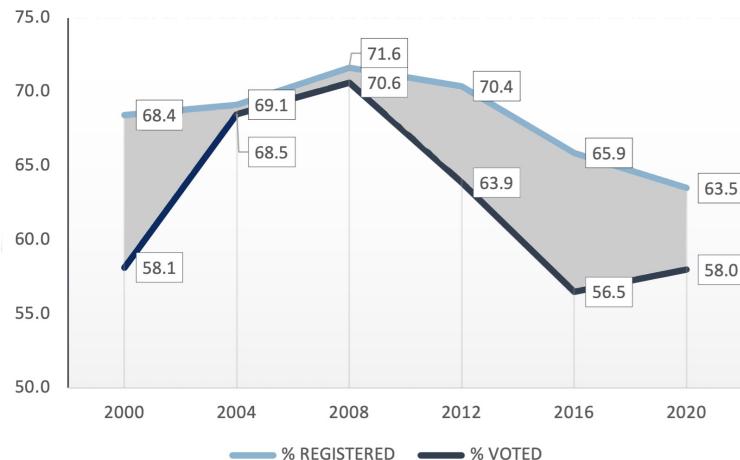
Data: Brennan Center for Justice; Maps: Community Building Strategies

Despair and Disillusionment

All too many voters 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 racism fosters deep disparity and oppression on a daily basis in communities of color.

And in the Midwest, Black voters face the same crushing reality of deindustrialization and hypersegregation, trends that dampen hope and optimism as their communities continue to face job and housing loss, poor quality schools, and so much more.

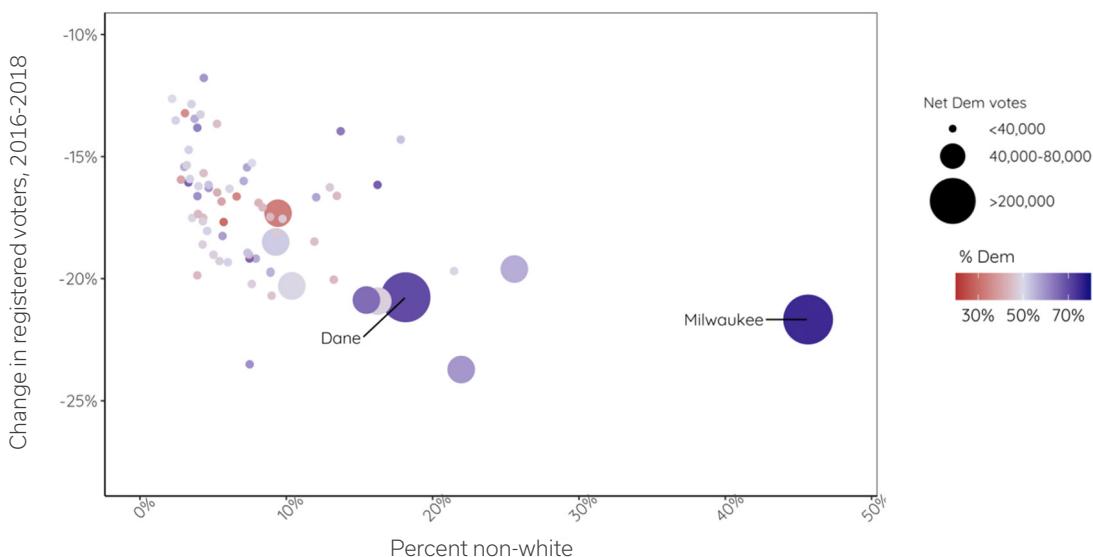
Fig 13: Black Voter Participation, 2000-2020



Data: US Census; Chart: Community Building Strategies

This graph represents the percentage of the population in our seven states that identify as Black (alone or in combination) who registered to vote, compared with those who both registered and voted. The gray area represents individuals who registered but did not vote.

Fig 14: Wisconsin Voter Purges by County/Percent Non-White, 2016



Data: Wisconsin Secretary of State; Chart: P3 Lab

One example of the impact of voter suppression in the Midwest – the purging of voters in Wisconsin, resulting in a disproportionate number of Black voters losing their right to vote. Voters in larger, less white counties (i.e. Milwaukee and Dane) showed a major dropoff in registered voters. The racial composition of a county is a statistically significant predictor of the number of voters purged there.

In short, even after the election of our nation's first Black president in 2008, many Black voters in the Midwest see more despair today than tangible improvements in their daily lives. While Democratic political operatives are often dismissive of and even insulted by the idea that Democrats are no better than Republicans, we must grapple with the depth of disillusionment; it is not unfounded.

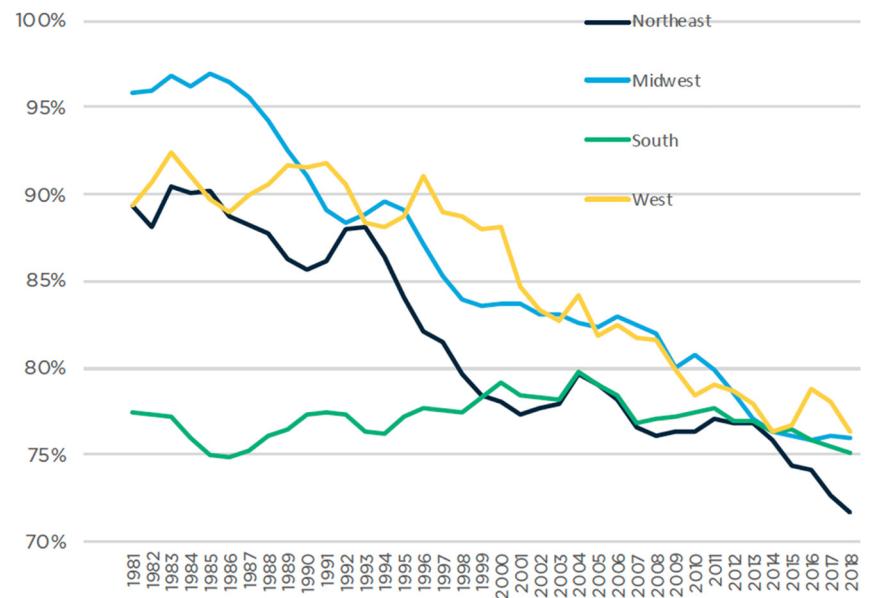
A critical example is the wave of housing crises that have unfolded in Black communities across the Midwest. The first wave began in the 1970s as deindustrialization unfolded: whites fled to the suburbs, resulting in population loss and its associated decline in older industrial cities. This resulted in a 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 2008 Great Recession, Black families in the Midwest were both disproportionately foreclosed upon and lost more than half of their wealth because Black families tend to carry a larger share of wealth in their homes.⁸⁷

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

Fig 15: 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.

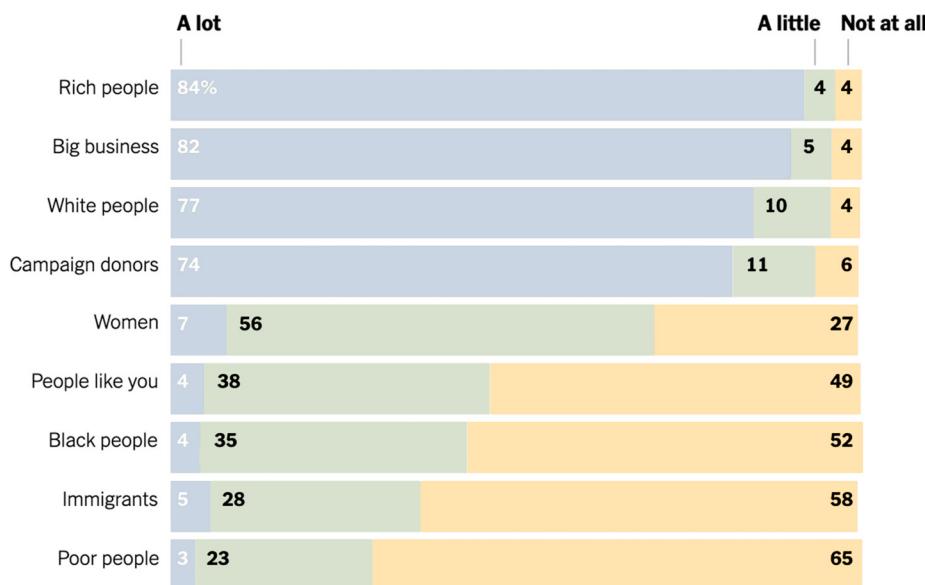
of despair and hopelessness. For many white people, it sowed fertile soil for right wing populism. For many people of color, it left them feeling that democracy was fundamentally broken, and that their participation does not matter, nor would it change any conditions that they face.

As a part of its Black Census Project, the Black Futures Lab working with HIT strategies surveyed 30,000 Black voters to illustrate the views and orientation of Black voters. Perhaps most telling was how Black voters see politicians' priorities, as evidenced by Figure 16 on the following page.

Democratic operatives see Black voters as a reliable source of votes who have little choice but to vote for Democratic candidates. Black voters rightly see this transaction for what it is: hollow and often delivering little or nothing for their communities. Those same operatives complain that Black leaders

Fig 16: 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

are undermining their ability to build a multiracial coalition by demanding that the party take on structural racism directly. The first assertion is insulting to Black voters. The second is simply wrong. It is impossible to have a multiracial governing coalition unless Black organizations have power and the ability to advance their agenda – both on their own terms and as part of a negotiated governing coalition. On the whole, investments made by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Presidential campaigns spent little to no money on Black-led organizations undertaking long-term power building and year-round organizing. To the extent that these campaigns invest in "field" (i.e. grassroots people), they hire national vendors to carry out short-term canvassing operations to turn out the vote: a strategy that presents diminishing returns, if not proving to be altogether useless.

In order to win the Midwest, 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. Research from Black Futures Lab shows a clear blueprint for an agenda that Black communities care deeply about low wages, the lack of affordable health care, rising college costs, and the lack of affordable housing.

Organizing on the Ground: Detroit Action

Detroit Action – and their 501c3 sister organization Detroit Action Education Fund – work 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.”⁸⁸ During the pandemic by necessity, Detroit Action 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 believes deeply in value-centered organizing that elevates the talent and genius of Black and Brown staff and leaders who embrace leaderful movements, embrace 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:

- » 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.
- » Ended loopholes that exclude Black and Brown voters. Through a close partnership with the Michigan Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist, Detroit Action 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 used to prevent Black and Brown voters from participating in 2020 elections.
- » Organized to demand accountability and justice from Wayne County Prosecutor Kim Worthy and the Detroit Police Department for unsolved murders of Black and Brown young people at the hands of the police and senseless community violence.

To mobilize the strength and reach of Black and Brown voters, Detroit Action built a base of more than 36,000 voters – including 20,000 new and infrequent voters in 2020. Detroit Action implemented both deep canvassing and voter education programs that shaped the commitment, strength, and participation of their leaders. As Branden Synder, Executive Director, argues: Detroit Action’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.”

THE CONFLICTED MIDWESTERN WHITE VOTER

The mythical moderate white voter does not exist. There are instead, millions of conflicted white voters for whom we must contest and who have the potential to be brought into transformative politics.

For the foreseeable future, white voters will be the single largest element of any multiracial progressive coalition built in the Midwest. Depending on the state, today we need anywhere from 41 to 46 percent of the white vote to win statewide elections. Some argue that contesting for white voters who are not already progressive necessarily requires pandering to racists, since "studies have now shown that white Trump voters are largely driven by racial resentment and anxiety about the country's demographic changes."⁸⁹ But the assumption that contesting for these voters 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.⁹⁰

Significant numbers of people in the Midwest voted for the first Black President, and then subsequently voted for a white supremacist. Rather than damning Trump voters as irredeemably racist, the fact that a substantial cadre of voters appear to have swung from Obama to Trump demonstrates that "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."⁹¹

Fig 17: White Support for Democrats

	2008	2012	2016	2020	High	Low
					w/win	w/win
Ohio	46	41	33	39	46	41
Michigan	51	x	36	44	51	44
Indiana	45	38	32	36	45	45
Illinois	51	x	41	50	51	41
Wisconsin	54	48	42	46	54	46
Minnesota	53	x	43	51	53	43
Missouri	42	32	28	36	x	x

Democratic Victory

Data: CNN Exit Polling; Chart: Community Building Strategies

Voting for Trump then was not necessarily an expression of intrinsic, immutable racism. *Racism is organized.*

The problem is that white voters' conflicting racial attitudes have mostly been organized by the Right,⁹² which has effectively and ruthlessly primed and mobilized the unconscious biases of these voters, with little effective opposition by the Left. Trump's dog whistle politics were able to take root in significant part because they were not effectively opposed.

The electoral math makes clear that an essential component of any Midwest electoral strategy must be to engage with voters whose racial conflicts leave them vulnerable to the Right's dog whistles but, with proper intervention, are also open to an egalitarian agenda.⁹³

An effective intervention must be grounded in an understanding of what made so many voters susceptible to Trump's racial appeal.

And to be clear, we are not talking about all white voters, but a subset of voters that is critical to the establishment of a sustainable multiracial governing coalition.

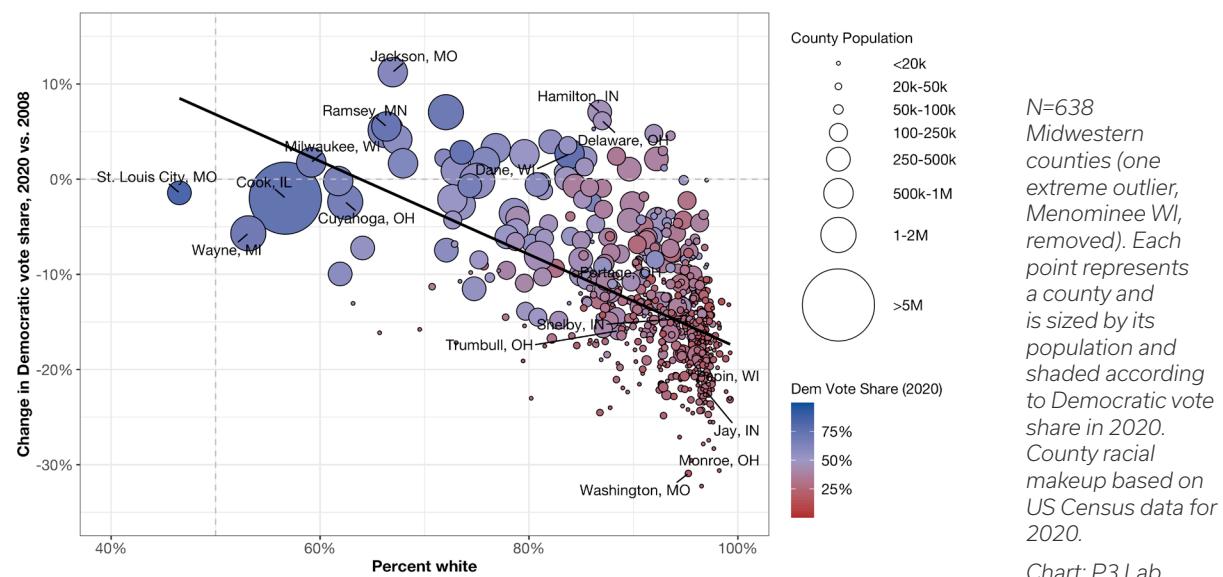
In Jennifer Silva's book *We're Still Here: Pain and Politics In the Heart of America*, she interviews conflicted voters from across the country. Silva asserts that what seems like incoherent views make sense when understood from the vantage point of personal life experience, which involves physical and emotional pain and trauma, personal betrayal, and institutional betrayal by the school and criminal justice systems.

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 voters to contradictory places, including resentment toward those 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 structures rather than personal failure.

Fig 18: Change in Democratic Vote Share by Percentage White



Organizing White Voters

One fundamental difference between white voters in the Midwest and those in the South, is that white voters in the Midwest have historically anchored progressive multiracial governing coalitions. Yet today we are losing those voters all across the Midwest. The narrow margins in Wisconsin and Michigan and the close margin in Minnesota in 2016 highlight deeply troubling trends. If we lose too many white voters, the gains we will make by changing demographics and expanding the electorate will not make up for the losses. That is a fundamental difference between the political climates in the Midwest and the South/Southwest.

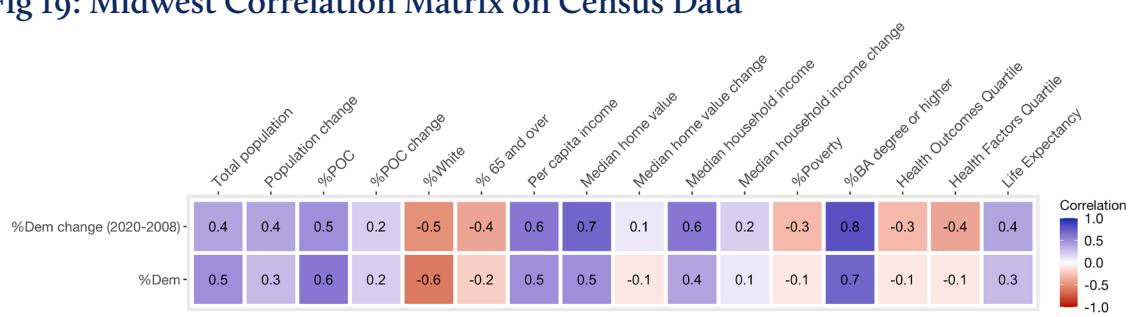
This is evident when we examine the racial composition of Midwest counties and how that composition is increasingly predictive of Democratic performance. Specifically, as the share of white voters increases in these counties, Democratic vote share decreases. However, the relationship between these two variables has changed dramatically in recent years. In Ohio, for example, the correlation between white voter share and Democratic performance jumped from -0.6 to -0.86, an exceptional increase over just four Presidential cycles. This pattern is plotted above in Figure 18, with points representing all counties in the region, comparing the share of white population (x-axis) with the percentage change in Democratic vote share (y-axis).

In 12 years, nearly half of all counties (46.8 percent) saw Democratic vote share decline by 15 percentage points or more. The vast majority of these counties were smaller, whiter, and more rural. This is a dramatic terrain shift over a short period of time, in places where underlying demographics remained the same. In other words, these counties are not more white than they were in 2008. Their residents' conflicted views about race were organized and weaponized by Trump. Meanwhile, Democrats improved their vote share from 2008 to 2020 in only 31 counties (4.8 percent).

While racial diversity is increasingly highly correlated with Democratic performance in the Midwest, it is not the only predictive factor. A more nuanced analysis of the sociodemographic conditions of the region underscores this. Figure 19 below is a correlation matrix, showing the direction and strength of association between factors including age, race, income, and life expectancy tied to Democratic performance for all counties in the seven states of our study.

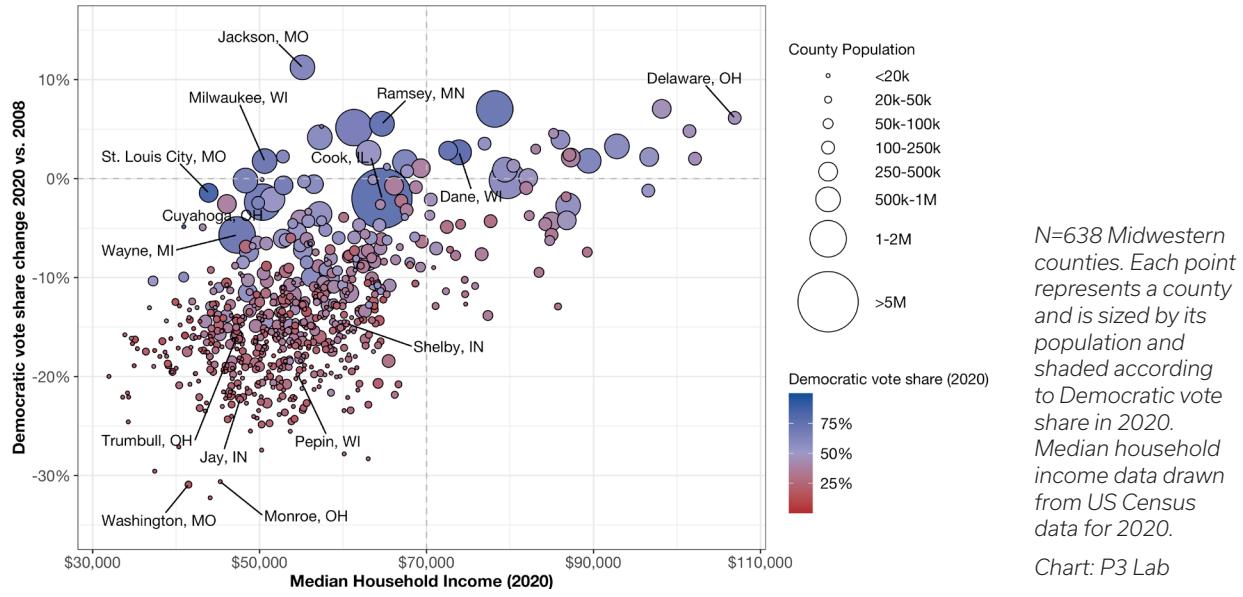
The top row of Figure 19 summarizes the strength of the relationship between key variables and the resultant *change* in Democratic vote share between 2008-2020. The second row expresses the relationship between these same key variables and *absolute* Democratic vote share in 2020.

Fig 19: Midwest Correlation Matrix on Census Data



Data: 2000 US Census
Chart: State Power Fund

Fig 20: Change in Democratic Vote Share by Median Household Income



In addition to racial diversity, median household income is strongly positively associated with Democratic performance in these and other places across the country (Figure 20). We also find that poorer health outcomes correlate with lower Democratic performance over the past decade.

On the whole, this chart tells a story that Democratic performance improves when counties in the Midwest are diverse, see growth in population, have higher per capita income, and better health outcomes. Basically, when people on average experience a better quality of life. Democratic performance has decreased where counties are more white, aging, shrinking in population, experiencing increased poverty and worse health outcomes. In short, where quality of life is declining.

The Midwest counties that have fallen the most in Democratic performance over the last decade are places that are predominantly white and have lower median income. It is precisely this combination of race and class dynamics that the right wing has organized into political coherence for these voters over a relatively short period of time.

These trends shape two dominant approaches taken by national political operatives in the region. The first approach is made by political operatives who pander to white voters, building electoral programs that avoid addressing race and argue that a moderate agenda focused on the middle class is the only path. The second approach is based in shame, painting anyone who did or does support Trump as racist⁹⁴ or even "deplorable," in an attempt to guilt trip white voters about their choices and views. This second approach often takes the form of snap and harsh judgments of someone who violates norms as set by progressive activists. The Right has weaponized the worst of this behavior, framing it as "cancel culture" alongside recent attempts to impugn critical race theory.

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

If we want to win the Midwest in the short- and long-term, we must abandon the traditional electoral approach that atomizes voters as individual consumers of politics. The strategy of “treating” voters like a sick patient who has digested too many Tucker Carlson shows on Fox News or Alex Jones conspiracy theories, and simply needs to be prescribed the right TV ad does not and will not build a governing coalition. The question that has defined political investments: *What will motivate a voter to vote for a particular candidate in the shortest time frame and at the lowest possible cost?* is the wrong question to ask.

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 voters are conflicted. Our approach must lean into understanding why that is the case and what economic, demographic, and cultural trends shape their identity. This does not mean avoiding race, but leaning into race and class as a prerequisite for building a multiracial governing coalition.

The choice in front of us must be to abandon these two dominant approaches to organizing white voters, choosing a third path that values and understands their critical importance as anchors of any emergent multiracial governing coalition, and builds the relational human capacity to move them towards openness and hope.

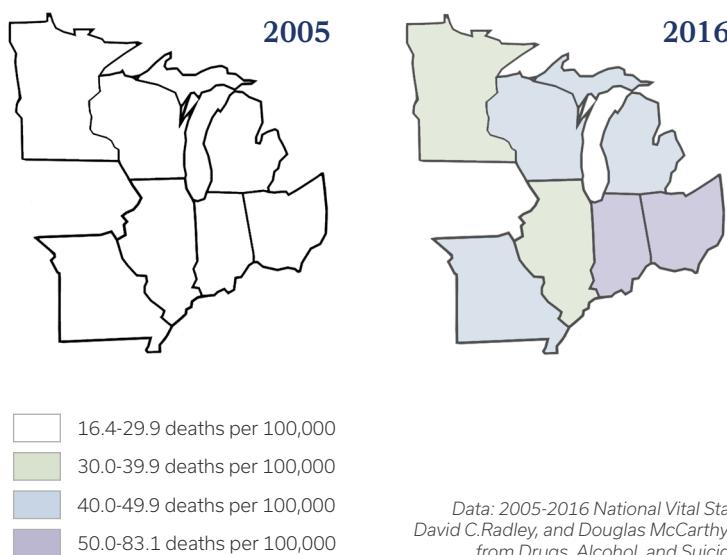
The Damage of Despair and Shame

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 the right, especially the extreme right, infiltrates self-help spaces, targets people with histories of trauma and betrayal, and mobilizes those experiences and accompanying feelings into political resentment.

By mobilizing shame, the Left may gain catharsis and solidify its own in-group identity amongst its core believers through championing its own moral superiority, but by doing so it unwittingly both closes its doors to potential adherents and aids the right’s own extremist project.

Fig 21: Indicators of Despair and Shame: Deaths from Drugs, Alcohol, or Suicide per 100,000 people in the Midwest, 2005-2016



Economist Ann Case and 2015 Nobel laureate in economics Angus Deaton describe one of the main causes of rising morbidity (the increase in alcoholism, drug overdoses, and suicides) as “deaths of despair” by those who have given up hope. The deteriorating health of midlife white Americans (particularly those with low levels of education) can be linked to stagnant wages and the collapse of the white working class due to globalization and automation – and could have been avoided if economic growth had been more equally shared.⁹⁵

IMMIGRANT & NATIVE VOTERS IN THE MIDWEST

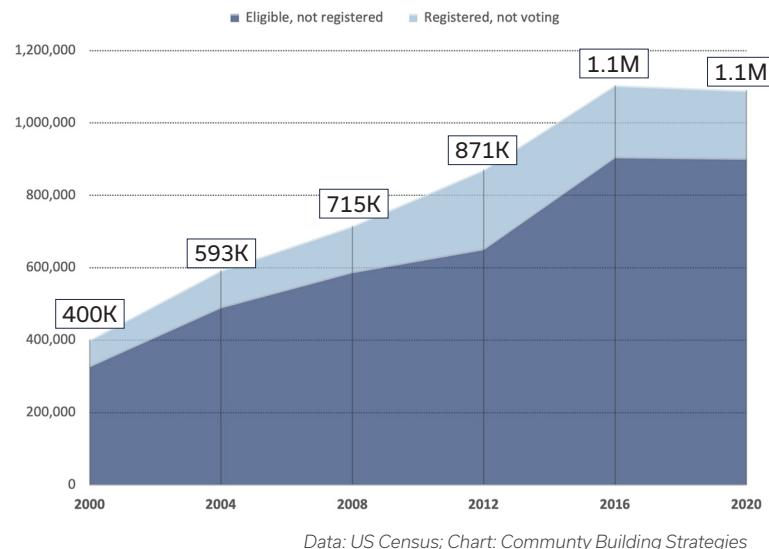
In more than 40 Midwestern cities, immigrants are a lifeline, bucking the pattern of population loss and revitalizing an aging workforce. In the last 15 years, immigrants accounted for 37 percent of the growth of Midwestern metropolitan areas — defined as a city and its surrounding suburbs. That's a significant contribution for a region that has experienced the slowest growth in the nation.⁹⁶

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.⁹⁷

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 (for example, Iowa Congressman Steve King) are also from the region. Immigrants are scapegoated for the loss of industrial jobs and demonized by the Right as undermining America's cultural identity and heritage.

Fig 22: Hispanic Votes Left on the Table, 2000-2020



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.

Immigrants are attacked in the Midwest both because they occupy a central place in a false narrative that blames them for economic decline and because they are growing in political power in states won by narrow margins.

While 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 wield power at the state level, as well as increasingly relevant and important to the economic vitality of the rural Midwest.

It is also important to recognize that none of these communities are monolithic. Disappointingly, we saw real incursions and some erosion in the levels of Latino support for the Biden campaign as Trump made real gains with these voters in certain parts of the country in 2020. This erosion of Latino levels of support meant that on average, Latino voters supported Democratic candidates at 63 percent, and Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) supported these candidates at 67 percent.

Nonetheless, given the majority support of more than three-fifths of these voters in statewide elections, tailored language and community specific strategies, as well as targeted in-person outreach, social and digital strategies, and power building in these communities are a necessary part of any governing coalition. With the conservative attack machine targeting immigrants and immigrant communities as a core part of their movement's strategy to generate racial resentment, we must engage immigrant communities and build cross-race solidarity for an inclusive America.

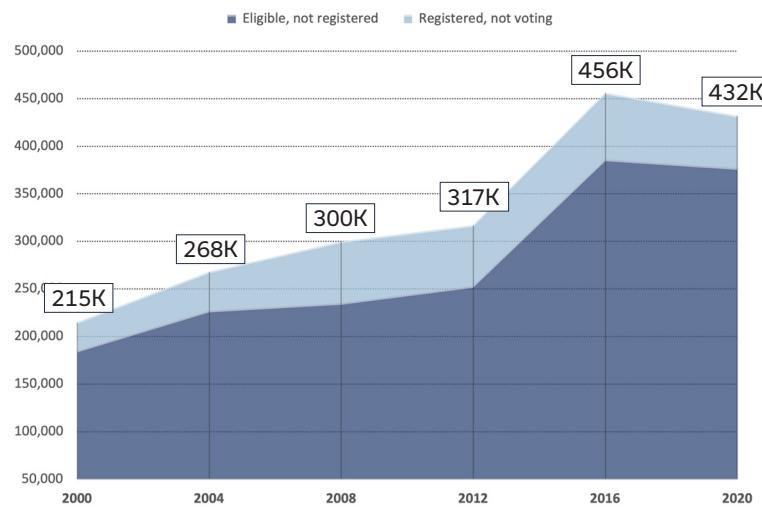
The Midwest has also seen AAPI and Muslim populations boom, as well as growing voter engagement from these communities over the same time period. As Catalyst notes in its digest on the 2020 elections:

Even in a high turnout year, AAPI voters had a remarkable jump in turnout: the biggest increase among all groups by race. The number of AAPI voters increased 39 percent from 2016, reaching 62 percent overall turnout for this group. AAPI voters remain strongly supportive of Democrats, delivering a 67 percent vote share to the Biden-Harris ticket, largely consistent with past elections.⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹

Illinois has the largest concentration of Muslim Americans in the country, and Michigan the sixth largest concentration.¹⁰⁰ The partisan preference of Muslim voters was estimated to be 67 percent Democratic in October 2020.¹⁰¹

Fig 23: 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.

Native American voters (while a relatively small portion of the Midwest electorate) are nonetheless on the whole a progressive voting block that swung for the Biden/Harris ticket in 2020, helping to win critical states such as Wisconsin and Michigan.¹⁰²

The Midwest is home to a host of organizations 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, serving as a national co-chair of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (the nation's largest immigrant rights network).

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 501c3/501c4), 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



MUSLIM
COALITION OF
ISAIAH

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 VOTERS 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 the 2020 campaign cycle and racial justice was a motivating factor for many youth.¹⁰³

Young voters are and must continue to be cultivated as an essential part of any multiracial governing coalition. In a Spring Youth Poll released in April 2021 by the Institute of Politics at the Harvard Kennedy School:

despite the state of our politics, hope for America among young people is rising dramatically, especially among people of color. As more young Americans are likely to be politically engaged than they were a decade ago, they overwhelmingly approve of the job President Biden is doing, favor progressive policies, and have faith in their fellow Americans.¹⁰⁴

These trends bode well for the Midwest, as we have seen a large increase in youth turnout, particularly in competitive battleground states. This is well illustrated by an analysis conducted by the Center for Information Research & Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University that shows large gains in youth engagement and voter participation from 2016 to 2020:

Fig 24: 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.

Amongst the states with the largest gains in youth turnout are all seven states we examine here including Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. As noted in America's Electoral Future: The Coming Generational Transformation:

Millenials and Generation Z appear to be far more Democratic leaning than their predecessors were at the same age. Even if today's youngest generations do grow more conservative as they age, it's not at all clear they would end up as conservative as older generations are today.¹⁰⁵

FIGHTING FOR HOPE

Building progressive governing power requires organizing. At its most basic, organizing is talking to people about important issues, plus moving them to take collective action.

Stacy Abrams and Lauren Groh-Wargo

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, our region 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 across class, engaging Black, white, immigrant, 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 messaging we can help combat the toxic narrative on the right and defeat attempts by conservatives to use race and class as weapons to divide the people in our region.

While our approach to each state must be distinct and nuanced, there are also broad lessons from recent campaigns that point to ways to engage and unite distinct constituencies. To win, we must uplift these lessons and double-down on existing state-based ecosystems. Our 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 progressive majority to win in the Midwest and at the national level.

Of the five US Senate seats that could flip from Republican to Democrat in 2022, two are in the Midwest (Ohio and Wisconsin). Of equal importance are statewide elections for Governor and down ballot statewide races in Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Illinois. In order to take advantage of both the immediate and long-term opportunities in the Midwest, we offer the following 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
- ESTABLISH** electoral programs through independent state ecosystems

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

The lack of deep investment in the Black vote and in Black communities must be reversed. We must amplify, fund, and invest in the talent of Black organizers and Black leaders.¹⁰⁶ While national operatives often claim that they want the energy, vision, and electoral benefits of the Black Lives Matter movement – described as potentially the “the largest movement in history”¹⁰⁷ 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.

We will not and cannot win the Midwest if the approach to Black and people of color communities continues to be transactional alongside the tacit assumption that these voters have nowhere else to go but the Democratic Party. We can only win the Midwest with historic Black and people of color turnout. And there is only one path to realizing that: sustained and long-term investments in Black organizing. If we hope to turn the energy of Black Lives Matter into durable political power, we must double down on investing in Black organizing in the Midwest.

This means investing in organizations like Detroit Action and BLOC in Wisconsin, which not only contact hundreds of thousands of voters, 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 electoral programs. Electoral programs in Black communities must be combined with long-term political education, service centers, churches, and other key mediating community institutions.

If we are going to achieve 2008-2012 levels of Black and people of color turnout, we must build a program of depth that involves deep and sustained organizing in Black and brown communities, online and in-person training that addresses real despair, and civic education on the basics of how government works. We must simultaneously recruit an energized set of people of color candidates at all levels, cultivating dynamic youth leaders who can engage and energize their peers, and most importantly support long-term investment over several cycles.

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

ORGANIZE

conflicted white voters with new and proven strategies

We reject the two dominant approaches to mobilizing white voters: either pandering to them by building electoral programs that avoid addressing race and argue for a moderate agenda focused on the “middle class”; or developing a “progressive” shame-based approach that paints anyone who did or does support Trump as racist or even “deplorable,” in an attempt to guilt trip white voters about their choices and views. With either of these approaches, there is no space to address or lean into the conflicting views churning inside of white voters. 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 voters 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 the potential for this approach.¹⁰⁸

Second, we must invest in rural and small town organizing. While it may not be possible to win majority vote blocs in these geographies, it is also untenable to simply abandon swaths of our states, leaving voters here subject to the conservative political agenda of politicians and parties who will engage them. Successful rural organizing projects like Hoosier Action in Indiana and We the People in Michigan are learning valuable lessons about approaches and methods to engage rural voters and 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’s deep canvassing can “meet the demographic, political, and cultural headwinds that progressives face in red states and rural areas and the challenges involved in building an enduring [progressive coalition].”¹⁰⁹

We must strategically organize conflicted white voters in suburbs, 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.¹¹⁰

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 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 right-wing policies and corporations. Race Class Narrative messaging anatomy fights back against these attacks while building cross-racial solidarity and support for issues.

One of the clearest success stories of using this narrative approach was the 2018 Greater than Fear campaign in Minnesota. By directly addressing the Republican party's use of Islamophobic, anti-Black, and anti-immigrant rhetoric, allied organizations in Minnesota created winning messages lifted through organizing, earned media, radio ads, digital strategies, and door-to-door and phone approaches. Overall, more than 76,000 Minnesota low-propensity and swing voters were targeted through wraparound strategies that often involved multiple touches with voters and multiple organizations and candidates using Greater than Fear messaging.

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 and persuades voters in the middle.

The results of the campaign were notable and successful. A 2018 examination of 1,414 Minnesota voters by Swayable showed that voters who viewed Greater than Fear ads were more likely to vote and more likely to support Democratic candidates. A survey of 800 Minnesota voters over three days following the election showed that 71 percent of voters in the treatment group and 74 percent of voters in the control group were more likely to vote for a candidate using Greater than Fear Messaging. This engagement contributed to sweeping success as DFL candidates won all statewide elective offices, progressive candidates such as Keith Ellison and Ilhan Omar were elected, and control of the Minnesota State House was regained.

In early 2021, We Make the Future was established to formally implement the Race Class Narrative. We Make the Future combines strategic communications and coalition building to develop a shared narrative that motivates our progressive base and persuade voters in 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 spokespersons. We Make the Future is currently advancing three core pillars of their work in the Midwest.

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

Building off the success of the Race Class Narrative, We Make the Future is continuing to employ proven initiatives like the Implementer Series that builds the narrative skills of communicators and organizers.

We Make the Future is providing ongoing strategic messaging technical assistance to partners, based on the latest research. We Make the Future is also continuing to work with Black leaders organizing in the Midwest to create and test media geared toward mobilizing Black audiences while also expanding to include an AAPI cohort that is active in the wake of the increased attention on anti-Asian rhetoric and crimes.

We Make the Future partners are many, but they include ISAIAH in Minnesota, We The People and Detroit Action in Michigan, the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, SEIU, NEA, and All In Wisconsin. We Make the Future has raised \$600,000, but needs \$2,129,000 to implement and strengthen the ground capacity partners heading into the 2022 midterms.

ESTABLISH electoral 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 viewed as messy or too

complicated. It is time to shift the way we fund in states.

The path to progressive governance in the Midwest relies on shifting away from massive and misguided investments in national organizations to direct investments in states and the organizations embedded in them.

We must make direct investments in state-based organizations reaching out to Black, white, immigrant, native, and young voters at the doors and on the phones. We must commit to building long-term, multiracial governing coalitions that will Win 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 in real fights. We offer 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 and operatives to commission our own research. In coming cycles, we must disrupt the trend of coastal elites driving surface-level polling 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 independent political programs. To that end, our research agenda seeks to:

- » Learn how Black, immigrant, Muslim, AAPI, Native and young voters understand their own political identities, relationships to government, and beliefs in democracy. We need to better understand each constituency to improve our organizing and political programs, as well as understanding 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 political blocs, while also bridging across race to move coherent multiracial electoral and legislative strategies.
- » Learn how best to turn our organized bases into digital ambassadors to counteract the right's strategic disinformation campaigns.
- » Build the capacity for community groups to conduct their own research, similar to the recent canvass of voters in precincts where Democratic performance dropped more than 25 percent between 2012 and 2020. For less than the cost of a single focus group, this canvass with 200 community members generated significant learning about how these individuals get their news (overwhelmingly via social media), how they make decisions, and how they feel about the future of their communities (conflicted, with concern that is real and hope that can be organized).

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 voters, conflicted white voters, immigrant and Native voters, and young people.

Too many coastal political operatives simply do not understand the region. They either argue for sole focus on white Obama/Trump "swing voters" or they argue solely for base turnout strategies that engage white voters who already 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 door, 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 the current volatile political environment.

With our very democracy at stake, we must commit to this alternative path to governing power and building multiracial coalitions in each and every Midwestern state.

FLIPPING THE FORMULA IN THE MIDWEST

Win the Midwest Strategy	Traditional Approach
Focuses on building multiracial governing coalitions	Focuses on a small set of "swing voters" and the mythical moderate white voter
Invests directly in state-based ecosystems, including state-based electoral strategies in the Midwest	Invests in national firms, vendors, and consultants
Electoral strategy is a component of long-term power building	Invests in "treatment" programs with no concern for infrastructure
Advances a Race Class Narrative	Messaging based on momentary polling around issues
Integrates digital and social networks work 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 strip-mine votes with little nuances for different constituencies
Funds long-term investments in women and people of color led organizations across geographies	Assumes that the "base" has no other place to go, provides money for last minute GOTV
Understands how Hope and Despair drive the region	Looks for the latest issues to message

ENDNOTES

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- 17 See Orfield, Myron. *Metropolitics: The New Suburban Reality* (Brookings, 2002) at 164 regarding the logic for vulnerable communities to resist low-income housing.
- 18 Snyder at 264; Scott, Robert E. "What's good for Wall Street is often bad for American workers and manufacturing," *Economic Policy Institute, Working Economics Blog*, June 27, 2019.
- 19 Russo & Linkon, "The Social Costs of Deindustrialization"; Policy Matters Ohio, "Promises Unfulfilled: Manufacturing in the Midwest," Change in Manufacturing Jobs county-by-county interactive map: <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/data-visualizations>
- 20 Policy Matters Ohio, "Promises Unfulfilled: Manufacturing in the Midwest."
- 21 ASO Communications, *Getting Our Story Straight Findings from Cognitive Elicitation Interviews*, at 22.
- 22 *Id.*
- 23 Shenker-Osorio, Anat. *Don't Buy It: The Trouble with Talking Nonsense about the Economy* (Public Affairs, 2012) at 117; see also Silva, *We're Still Here* at 169: ("Social change ... does not spring from informing working-class people about what their best interests are, or from bombarding them with the true facts of politics ...")
- 24 *Id.*
- 25 *Id.*
- 26 "Full transcript of Donald Trump's acceptance speech at the RNC," Vox, July 22, 2016 <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/21/12253426/donald-trump-acceptance-speech-transcript-republican-nomination-transcript>
- 27 *Id.*
- 28 Silva, Jennifer. *We're Still Here* at 14.
- 29 See, e.g. *Bad Money* at 169-174; see Ferguson, Thomas. *Golden Rule: The Investment Theory of Party Competition and the Logic of Money-Driven Political Systems* (The University of Chicago, 1995) at 275-328; Cummings, Chris. "Private Equity Smashes Its Campaign-Spending Record with 2020 Races," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 25, 2020, ("The largest recipient of individual [private equity] contributions was Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden,").

- 30 For instance, while the whole of the Youngstown region has been hammered by job losses and the ensuing consequences, black children in Youngstown bear the brunt of deprivation: of the country's 100 largest metro areas, Youngstown-Warren-Boardman ranks the lowest in terms of opportunity for black children, scoring a 3 out of 100 on the Childhood Opportunity Index. In contrast, opportunity for white children in Youngstown ranked 50 out of 100. <https://www.mahoningmatters.com/local-news/study-youngstown-area-ranks-the-lowest-in-terms-of-opportunity-for-black-children-1985558>
- 31 Silva, We're Still Here; see also Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Shuster, 2000); and Henry Lopez, Steven. *Reorganizing The Rust Belt: An Inside Story of the American Labor Movement* (California, 2004) at 54 (noting how experiences of deindustrialization and job loss turned many against unions, which they blamed for plant closings after failed union campaigns, leaving many skeptical of subsequent organizing efforts).
- 32 Silva, We're Still Here at 160.
- 33 Silva, We're Still Here, at 16-17.
- 34 Silva, *supra* at 161-162 (emphasis added).
- 35 See Haney Lopez, Ian. *Dog Whistle Politics*
- 36 "Full Transcript of Donald Trump's acceptance speech at the RNC," Vox, July 22, 2016.
- 37 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/06/07/429492/midwestern-great-recession-2001-destruction-good-jobs/>
- 38 First presidential debate 2016 [insert youtube link]
- 39 "Full transcript of Donald Trump's acceptance speech at the RNC," Vox, July 22, 2016
[https://www.vox.com/2016/7/21/12253426/donald-trump-acceptance-speech-transcript-republican-nomination-transcript\]](https://www.vox.com/2016/7/21/12253426/donald-trump-acceptance-speech-transcript-republican-nomination-transcript)
- 40 *Id.*
- 41 <https://www.brookings.edu/research/bidens-victory-came-from-the-suburbs/>
- 42 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]).
- 43 See generally Myron Orfield, *American Metropolis: The New Suburban Reality* (Brookings, 2002); Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf & Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitics 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.
- 44 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.
- 45 Orfield, *American Metropolis*, *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).
- 46 Orfield, *American Metropolis*, *supra* at 37-38.
- 47 Orfield, *American Metropolis*, *supra* at 36; need source for state infrastructure subsidies
- 48 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.")

49 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.")

50 <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3906116616-colerain-township-hamilton-county-oh/>

51 <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/results/>

52 Id.

53 <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3906116616-colerain-township-hamilton-county-oh/>; Ohio Department of Education District Profile (Cupp) Report: <http://odevax.ode.state.oh.us/htbin/F2020-DISTRICT-PROFILE.COM?irn=047365>

54 Id.

55 <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3906116616-colerain-township-hamilton-county-oh/>

56 <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/results/>

57 <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3906101980-anderson-township-hamilton-county-oh/>

58 <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/results/>

59 <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3906107300-blue-ash-city-hamilton-county-oh/>

60 <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/results/>

61 See powell, Racing To Justice, *supra*.

62 https://www.law.umn.edu/sites/law.umn.edu/files/downloads/m50_govtfiscal.pdf; see also Rusk, Cities Without Suburbs, *supra*.

63 See LeRoy, The Great American Jobs Scam, *supra*.

64 See powell, Racing To Justice, *supra* at 100-101 (noting that this is not a problem of individuals addressing their personal animus and is not a problem of individuals having a change of heart, it is a challenge to organize collectively in ways that reshape and reconstitute our sense of self and community: "Much of what we are learning from neuroscience flatly refutes such assumptions. Certainly we can and should become more conscious, but we should not see the problem of privilege and race as primarily an individual psychological effort." This is because at root are challenges of being and community, which can only be reconstituted through collective, interpersonal efforts, i.e. through organizing which engages and invites people to re-create themselves in community. Such efforts, powell argues, must address that "...whites in the twenty-first century are increasingly experiencing a sense of loss, not privilege. ... Clearly some of the status and benefits that have been a part of being white are changing ... they should and must change. But this does not take away from the anxiety, fear, and sense of loss that can be experienced during the transition ... we must pay attention to this aspect of needed change. Finally, some of the loss that is being experienced by whites is not in favor of the racial other; it is in favor of the elites. ... This requires a project that gives birth to a new meaning and space for whiteness that is not based on exclusion ... If we understand the injury that whiteness does, not only to those excluded but also to those inhabiting this white space, we will no longer have to ask why whites would give up their privilege.)

65 This strategy is characterized by a "demographics as destiny" theory and that a more diverse America will inevitably translate into progressive political gains.

66 <https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-racial-diversity-in-six-maps/>

67 <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/visualizing-50-years-of-global-steel-production/>

68 <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-midwest-immigrant-populations-met-20170918-story.html>

69 <https://csgmidwest.org/u-s-population-growth-slowed-in-past-decade-trend-was-even-more-pronounced-in-midwest/>

70 <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SOC-report1.pdf>

- 71 <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/losing-residents-but-still-growing-how-migration-and-population-change-affect-cities>
- 72 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/12/05/a-tale-of-two-rust-belts-continued-can-the-midwests-smaller-communities-succeed/>
- 73 <https://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/2020/09/ranking-us-cities-for-poverty-cleveland-12th-overall-but-no-1-among-places-of-at-least-200000-census-estimates.html>
- 74 <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/roots-structural-racism>
- 75 https://www.princeton.edu/news/2015/05/18/hypersegregated-cities-face-tough-road-change; for an overview of the effects and implications of residential segregation, see: Massey, Douglas S. & Denton, Nancy A. American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass (Harvard, 1993); Orfield, Myron. American Metropolitics: The New Suburban Reality, (Brookings, 2002); Dreier, Peter, Mollenkopf, John & Swanstrom, Todd. Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-first Century (Kansas, 2001); for an excellent history of how residential segregation was created by government policy in collusion with the real estate industry, see: Rothstein, Richard. The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America (Liveright, 2017) and Taylor, Keeanga-Yahmahtta. Race For Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership, (UNC Press, 2019).
- 76 https://belonging.berkeley.edu/roots-structural-racism#footnote19_x7pse4x
- 77 <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.html>
- 78 <https://educationdata.org/number-of-college-graduates>
- 79 <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/americans-satisfaction-with-and-attachment-to-their-communities/>
- 80 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/17/behind-trumps-win-in-rural-white-america-women-joined-men-in-backing-him/>
- 81 <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-do-white-working-class-people-vote-against-their-interests-they-dont/>
- 82 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/04/17/us/vaccine-hesitancy-politics.html>
- 83 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/07/29/us/delta-variant-risk-map.html>
- 84 <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/roots-structural-racism>
- 85 The Midwest has always been a site of Black political activism, Washington Post April 2021
- 86 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/us/politics/joe-biden-black-voters.html>
- 87 <https://nlihc.org/resource/report-shows-african-americans-lost-half-their-wealth-due-housing-crisis-and-unemployment>
- 88 <https://detroitaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-Annual-Report-Spread.pdf>
- 89
- 90 powell, Racing to Justice at 9.
- 91 powell, Racing to Justice at 21, 23.
- 92 Lopez, Dog Whistle Politics.
- 93 There is a reason why a racist politician like Trump went out of his way to stagecraft racial inclusion (eg, "Blacks for Trump," featuring the black sheriff from Milwaukee at the 2016 convention, etc). Trump feigned racial inclusion because the Right understands that many of their voters susceptible to racist appeals also do not want to think of themselves as racist – i.e. the Right understands many of their voters are conflicted and does not take their racism for granted.
- 94 Perhaps the most infamous and egregious was Clinton's dismissal of Trump voters as "deplorables." She effectively mobilized shame insofar as this was an act of shunning, of reminding the core believers of their superior moral worth over their opponents, who by contrast were irredeemable and, therefore, not worthy of belonging and incapable of achieving the moral status required to become part of the Left's political project and community.
- 95 Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century; Anne Case, Princeton University; Angus Deaton, Princeton University (2017): <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/casetextsp17bpea.pdf>
- 96 <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-midwest-immigrant-populations-met-20170918-story.html>

- 97 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2018/09/02/455269/revival-and-opportunity/>
- 98 Lopez, Dog Whistle Politics.
- 99 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/09/asian-americans-are-the-fastest-growing-racial-or-ethnic-group-in-the-u-s/>
- 100 <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/muslim-population-by-state>
- 101 <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2020/9/14/understanding-the-american-muslim-vote>
- 102 <https://missoulacurrent.com/government/2020/11/native-vote/>
- 103 <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/state-state-2020-youth-voter-turnout-midwest>
- 104 <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/spring-2021-harvard-youth-poll>
- 105 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/politics-and-elections/reports/2020/10/19/491870/americas-electoral-future-3/>
- 106 https://ssir.org/articles/entry/getting_out_the_vote_is_tougher_than_you_think#
- 107 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>
- 108 <https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/01/10/agora-faith-race-politics-999-em1-art0-politics/>
- 109 <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/2020-presidential-campaign-tactic-deep-canvassing-1059531/>
- 110 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d7Y96UksnxLhqMQ-kO3WUnptbl-on5Jp/view>

