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***Now or Never:
The Fight for the Millennial
Generation***

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Quadrant Metrics LLC
February 2015



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Preface

Since 2000, the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) has sought to increase resources for young people organizing for a more just and equitable society.

With a belief that social problems are best solved by those who have been most directly affected, our primary focus has always been on organizations led by low-income, young people of color. We also have placed particular emphasis on organizations working with 13-18 year-olds because we believe early engagement can contribute to the development of lifelong leaders. This kind of youth organizing experienced significant growth in the 1990s and early 2000s. New organizations formed, practices for supporting the development of young leaders improved, and young people won significant policy victories on a range of issues including education reform, immigrant rights, and environmental justice.

In the past, the youth organizing groups we have supported focused primarily on issue-based organizing and tended to stay away from electoral politics. Our 2013 field scan¹, however, found that 41 percent of the groups we surveyed were involved in nonpartisan voter engagement and another 34 percent

were interested in getting involved. These findings caused us to take a deeper look at how youth organizing groups were engaging in the electoral process. We found that, under the radar of many funders and civic engagement leaders, a handful of youth organizing groups were producing strong voter engagement numbers while at the same time developing the next generation of civic engagement leaders. In addition, these groups had some unique advantages in reaching infrequent voters. Most voter engagement programs engage younger people to do canvassing and voter outreach. Youth organizing groups, however, have a pool of young leaders who are from the communities in which they are working and have several years of leadership development and campaign experience. This set of skills and experiences means they can talk to infrequent voters with a passion and authenticity that cannot be matched.

Excited by our preliminary findings, we decided to engage Quadrant Metrics LLC in a deeper analysis of how youth

organizing groups were engaging young people in the fall 2014 election. This analysis found a range of groups effectively engaging young people, including those engaging young people of color but also those working with white and relatively older young people. What these groups had in common was the year-round engagement of young people from their communities in issues, campaigns, and political education.

As we look to the 2016 election and beyond, the future of our democracy may be determined partially by who is able to engage the Millennial Generation. A battle is already underway to reach this large, racially diverse, and politically independent demographic. Millennials of color are a fast-growing sector of the electorate and among the most committed to social justice, but they also have been among the hardest to engage by traditional institutions and means. Quadrant Metrics LLC, relying on its significant experience evaluating civic engagement programs, has analyzed the data on a set of youth organizing groups involved in voter engagement. They point to several concrete ways that youth organizing groups can play invaluable roles

in building an active, engaged, and conscious Millennial electorate – but much work will be required to make this possible. Our hope is that this paper will spur conversations among funders, practitioners, and other stakeholders on how we can best support and connect the leadership of young people. Now, more than ever, we are convinced that the key to building just and equitable communities lies in supporting the leadership of young people.

Eric Braxton
Executive Director

FUNDERS' COLLABORATIVE ON YOUTH ORGANIZING
February 2015



1. Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.fcyo.org/media/docs/7343_FCYO-11-01.pdf

Executive Summary

This paper highlights how civic engagement leaders can look to the field of youth organizing for promising new strategies to assist them in increasing voter participation, passing beneficial policies, affecting redistricting in 2021, and changing how the Millennial Generation thinks about values and policies for their lifetimes.

*We have proposed **4** specific impacts of youth organizing toward these ends:*

- 1. Identify youth-focused strategic initiatives that can drive public discourse, as a way to change the issue environment for elections and policy fights.** The issues young people have taken up in communities across the country are urgent but also often fit George Lakoff's strategic initiative criteria: They can motivate and resonate with people of color and low-income communities; appeal to moderately-minded voters; and create a wedge among conservatives.
- 2. Double down on youth organizing groups with a proven track record in executing large-scale voter engagement programs and identify others with the potential to scale up.** Many youth organizing groups have voter engagement results that are commensurate with those of the best civic engagement organizations in the country, regardless of age. Even more youth organizing groups are ready to step up, if provided with additional support and resources.
- 3. Shape the Millennial Generation through highly visible and emotional "moment to movement" campaigns, primarily using communications and organizing methods.** This strategy maximizes the passion of young people when movement moments happen and can forever change the political consciousness of the Millennial Generation.
- 4. Formalize a leadership pipeline for 21st century organizers and related professions – a longstanding gap in the sector – and develop methods to track youth alumni.** The civic engagement sector needs a state-based, systematic approach to a leadership pipeline that will place youth leaders into seasoned organizer positions and help transition the staff of youth organizations into non-youth organizations when they are ready to move on.

The field of youth organizing, with these recommendations, can demonstrably strengthen the civic engagement sector's ability to achieve more and lasting wins. But to fine-tune and eventually operationalize these recommendations, many more conversations need to happen – with practitioners, funders, and sector leaders. We advocate strongly for these conversations to happen in a formal way in 2015 so we may collectively begin to lay the groundwork for impact in 2016, 2018, and 2020, culminating in a reshaped battlefield for 2021 redistricting fights and beyond.

Introduction

Purpose of this Paper:

On the heels of sweeping midterm electoral changes and with redistricting looming in just six years, the civic engagement sector in America is re-imagining the strategies, forms, tools, and leadership necessary to win the hearts and minds of the American public, reinvigorate democracy up and down the demographic ladder, and, ultimately, pass policies at the local, state and federal levels that create a more equitable society.

This paper is for leading practitioners and investors of civic engagement, as they continue to refine what civic engagement needs to look like in the 21st century.

This paper highlights how, as this needed refinement continues, civic engagement leaders can look to the field of youth organizing for promising new strategies to assist them in achieving greater wins now, for redistricting in 2021 and for decades to come. This opportunity is not without competition, however. Conservatives are also seeking to win over this cohort for the next 50 years. It's now or never to win the hearts and minds of the Millennial Generation.

Through numerous outstanding examples³, previous research on youth organizing has tended to view youth organizing through a youth development lens, looking at the maturation, increased skills, and changed worldview of individual young leaders and the benefits of youth organizing to the capacity and growth of youth organizing groups.

Millennials (those born after 1980 and into the early 2000s; currently, Millennials are 18-34 year olds) make up more than a quarter of the U.S. adult population now and will become more of an electoral priority as they age and increase their regularity of voting. The Pew Research Center summarizes² :

*Millennials are the most racially diverse generation in American history, a trend driven by the large wave of Hispanic and Asian immigrants who have been coming to the U.S. for the past half century, and whose U.S.-born children are now aging into adulthood. In this realm, Millennials are a transitional generation. Some 43% of Millennial adults are non-white, the highest share of any generation... The Millennial generation is forging a distinctive path into adulthood. Now ranging in age from 18 to 33, **they are relatively unattached to organized politics** and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry — and optimistic about the future (emphasis ours).*

These impacts are critically important but are not the focus of this paper. The practice of youth organizing has been in existence for decades but has been a relatively underutilized and untapped resource for the broader civic engagement sector.

With a pragmatic lens, *we seek instead to distill key outcomes of youth organizing that, if formalized, expanded in scale, and more purposefully aligned with state civic engagement efforts, can provide strategies that the broader civic engagement sector can use to achieve greater external impacts in voter participation and policy.*

In other words, when aligned, youth organizing can and should play a larger role in building power in states. This latent power will be essential in increasing civic and voter participation leading up to 2021 redistricting and over the coming decades.

3. Two excellent examples are Rogers, J., & Terriquez, V. (2013). Learning to Lead: The Impact of Youth Organizing on the Educational and Civic Trajectories of Low-Income Youth. Los Angeles, CA: Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access; and Shah, Seema. (May 2011). Building Transformative Youth Leadership: Data on the Impacts of Youth Organizing. Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

High Capacity Impacts: Communities United (formerly Albany Park Neighborhood Council) targeted 42,000 voters in Chicago, and New Era registered 28,000 voters in Colorado in 2014. Since 2009, Inner City Struggle has identified a mobilized base of 36,000 residents in Los Angeles County.

We have proposed **4** specific impacts of youth organizing toward these ends:

1. Identify **youth-focused strategic initiatives** that can drive public discourse, as a way to change the issue environment for elections and policy fights.
2. Double down on youth organizing groups with a proven track record in executing **large-scale voter engagement programs** and identify others with the potential to scale up.
3. Shape the Millennial Generation through **highly visible and emotional “moment to movement”** campaigns, primarily using communications and organizing methods.
4. Formalize a **leadership pipeline** for 21st century organizers and related professions – a longstanding gap in the sector – and develop methods to track youth alumni.

We close the report with several recommendations for next steps to test increased alignment among youth organizing groups, civic engagement organizations, and funders who have an interest in supporting both.

We believe youth organizing has been relatively untapped as a driver of civic engagement victories. We hope this paper contributes to a conversation about the high-capacity impacts the youth organizing sector can deliver.



Forward Montana Foundation registers students to vote on campus

Methodology

Working with the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO), Quadrant Metrics LLC collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data from participating organizations, state-based stakeholders, and investors. For some participating organizations, data collection and analysis were facilitated by The Quad, an online impact-assessment tool of Quadrant Metrics LLC. For organizations not using The Quad, we collected data following the November 4, 2014, election. Specific quantitative data analyzed included:

- Voter outreach attempts, contacts, and identification of supporters.
- Total voter turnout in the geographies of each participating organization.
- For organizations already on The Quad, social-network analysis of relationships among youth organizations and other groups in the civic engagement infrastructure in their states.
- Number of activists, leaders and volunteers trained.

We interviewed 18 individuals to supplement and provide context to the quantitative data (please see Appendix for list of interviewees). Interviewees included staff and youth at youth organizations, funders, civic engagement practitioners, and key strategists in states.

A Note on Youth Organizing

Characteristics of Youth Organizing

In almost every case, the youth organizing groups that perform highly in the four areas of impact share a common set of characteristics. They:

- *Consist of young people from the communities in which they work who share the experiences and backgrounds of traditionally disenfranchised voters.*
- *Undertake sustained, year-round organizing and outreach that goes beyond electoral engagement, over multiple years.*
- *Conduct ongoing training and hands-on practice for young people in organizing and civic engagement.*
- *Provide political education that supports young people in articulating a sophisticated analysis of community conditions placed in a larger political context.*
- *Have a strategy for building power and scale.*
- *Have a track record of being productive members of coalitions and alliances.*
- *Engage young people in leadership roles within organizations and in external venues.*

This paper is not meant to be a landscape survey of youth organizing, nor an effort to define youth organizing or recommend a particular style of youth organizing. We identified a small sample of youth organizations with the assistance of FCYO, the Youth Engagement Fund and the Latino Engagement Fund at the Democracy Alliance, and the Partnership Fund. Like all sectors, the youth organizing field is diverse. Some organizations – like those traditionally supported by FCYO – work with middle- and high school-aged people rooted in communities of color, while others work with predominantly white college students. Some engage in traditional, one-on-one organizing toward building community power. Others are more oriented toward voter engagement. Still others are experts in motivating thousands of people to action around high-profile events. Some are youth-led; others are housed within adult-led entities. Even within the small number of youth organizations in this study, several models exist. We interviewed and analyzed data from a selection of youth organizing efforts that, as a diverse cohort, could provide insight into the potential unique contributions of youth organizing toward civic engagement outcomes.



funders' collaborative on youth organizing

About the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing

The mission of the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing is to substantially increase the philanthropic investment in and strengthen the organizational capacities of youth organizing groups across the country, particularly those that meet the characteristics above. FCYO has supported the field of youth organizing for more than 10 years. FCYO believes that the participation and leadership of young people, particularly young people of color, are critical in achieving social justice.

FCYO supports community-based youth organizing groups, primarily focused on middle- and high school-aged youth rooted in communities of color. Examples of organizations FCYO supports include:

- **Communities United, Chicago, IL**
- **Inner City Struggle, Los Angeles, CA**
- **Make the Road, New York City, NY**
- **SouthWest Organizing Project, Albuquerque, NM**

About Quadrant Metrics LLC

Quadrant Metrics LLC is a strategy and impact assessment firm based in New Mexico. Its impact assessment tool, The Quad, is a cloud-based app that tracks, aggregates, and visualizes civic engagement data in real time. The Quad helps investors and their partners better understand their external impact and improve strategic decision-making. The Quad was founded in 2011 with the Atlantic Philanthropies for the purpose of designing an impact assessment system for civic engagement grantees in the United States. To-date, more than 600 organizations in 30 states have used The Quad.



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Aligning Roles for Youth Organizing Groups in State Infrastructures

The midterm election in 2014 promises rough waters ahead for policies benefiting young people, in city councils, state legislatures and Congress alike. Sweeping electoral victories by conservative candidates at the state and federal levels have triggered civic engagement leaders to reexamine the functions required in states to bring forth social change in the short and long term.

A part of this reexamination should include the role of youth organizing groups in state civic engagement infrastructures. Based on the data reviewed and interviews conducted, following are four promising and concrete impacts of youth organizing groups that, when aligned, can strengthen a renewed and revised civic engagement sector in states, toward the goal of increasing voter participation, passing beneficial policies, affecting redistricting in 2021, and changing how the Millennial Generation thinks about values and policies for their lifetimes.

Identify youth-focused strategic initiatives that can drive public discourse, as a way to change the issue environment for elections and policy fights.

Civic engagement organizations – youth and non-youth alike – use different criteria with which to select issues. Often, organizations select issues that are immediate and urgent needs for their constituencies. Others have adopted a strategy put forth by George Lakoff and certainly used by the Right – to select “strategic initiatives” that can mobilize a base, persuade moderately-minded voters, and divide the opposition⁴. The Right has consistently and effectively used this model of issue selection, borne out in campaigns like the flag-burning amendment, tort reform, and anti-union legislation. Strategic initiatives, framed properly, often trigger deeply held values, which can be utilized to change the issue environment in which candidates and policymakers work.

Youth organizing groups present a tidy solution to this debate. The issues that young people have taken up in communities across the country are urgent and deeply felt but also often fit Lakoff’s strategic initiative criteria – they can motivate and resonate with people of color and low-income communities; appeal to moderately-minded voters; and create a wedge among conservatives. Additionally, young people are often effective messengers to these voting cohorts.

Examples abound. In 2012, working with The Atlantic Philanthropies, Quadrant Metrics conducted quarterly polling⁵ on the issue of school discipline. In key states like Colorado and North Carolina, voters were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “*Suspensions should be used in public schools only as a last resort.*” Responses included (Total Agree vs. Total Disagree):

State	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
CO	69-24	61-34	41-51
NC	61-31	69-25	51-43

In both states, this policy is quite appealing to liberals and moderates and almost cleanly divides conservatives down the middle.

The same is true for voter suppression. When asked, “*Do you think voter suppression – that is, eligible voters taken off registration lists or denied the right to vote – is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem in elections,*” Ohio and Nevada voters responded (“Major Problem” versus “Not a Problem”)⁶:

State	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
OH	58-11	39-25	22-40
NV	61-21	36-25	25-27

Again, we see majority support from both liberals and moderates (who are largely undecided), with conservatives split on this issue.

School Discipline Fight Transforms a Community:

Inner City Struggle in Los Angeles has led the fight to change school-discipline policy and challenge California’s school-to-prison pipeline. The issue of school discipline is complex. The youth of Inner City Struggle changed the frame on this controversial issue from a debate on punitive approaches to one that elevated the need for more investment in schools. Through their work, young people changed how adults think about school discipline and created a large and motivated base for education reform and increased investment in schools.



The “strategic initiative” splits hold true for comprehensive immigration reform, increasing funding for education, democracy policy, climate change, marriage equality, minimum wage, earned sick days, equal pay for equal work, criminal justice reform, and other issues by which young people are motivated. These youth-driven issues that bubble up from concrete needs of communities can become sector-wide wedge issues.

Recommendation #1:

The civic engagement sector should identify youth-focused strategic initiatives that can drive public discourse, as a way to change the issue environment for elections and policy fights.

4. Lakoff, George. (2006). Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision. The Rockridge Institute.

5. Quadrant Metrics Polling. (July 2012).

6. Quadrant Metrics Polling. (July 2014).

2

Double down on youth organizing groups with a proven track record in executing large-scale voter engagement programs and identify others with the potential to scale up.

From a survey completed in March 2014⁷, Millennials define themselves politically as:

- Democrat: 27%
- Republican: 17%
- Independent: 50%

A second study⁸, completed in October 2014 right before the November election, showed a similarly robust independence:

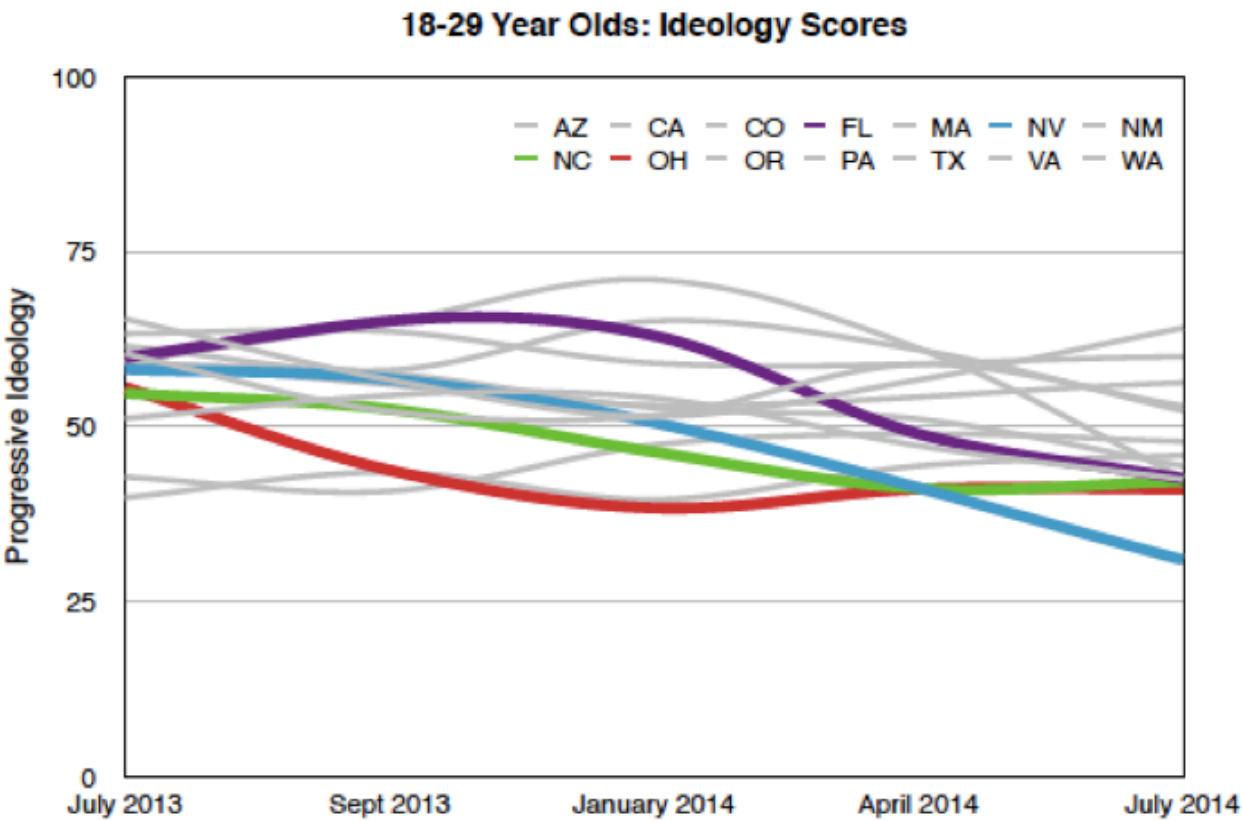
- Democrat: 33%
- Republican: 22%
- Independent: 42%

It has become a truism of politics, but *this Millennial Generation is up for grabs.*

A common goal of all youth organizing – and one that is shared by seasoned strategists within electoral politics and the broader civic engagement sector – is to engage Millennials – both Millennial voters and Millennial leaders – now in order to shape their political lens for later, or risk losing both to conservatives. This strategy is critical to creating long-term success with a changing electorate. The question for the civic engagement sector is,

“Who will grab Millennials, and how?”

This question is even more pressing, given longitudinal data. Quadrant Metrics conducts polling on issues and values quarterly in about 20 states, to identify trends in public opinion and create an ideology model in each state. The polling questions were selected in part because of their proven ability to predict a voter’s ideology. The data for 18-29 year olds is as follows:



On an ideology scale from liberal to conservative, it appears that 18-29 year olds are trending conservatively, in almost every state tested. The trend is especially stark in states like Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio. It is likely that race is the driver for this change in each state: Young white people represent the lion’s share of this conservative

trend. Nevertheless, the Millennial cohort overall is trending conservatively, possibly for decades. And youth of color – who are more progressive – are harder to engage with traditional tactics, furthering the need for youth organizing groups to engage them and young white young people alike.

7. Pew Research Center. (March 7, 2014). Millennials in Adulthood. Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>
 8. Institute of Politics at Harvard University. (October 29, 2014). Survey of Young Americans’ Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service: 26th Edition.

There are at least two archetypes for civic engagement methods used by youth organizing groups to engage this changing Millennial Generation. These methods are covered here and in the next section. The first is through traditional field activities – knocking on doors, making phone calls, and organizing campus- and school-based activities – proving what is possible when youth organizing reaches a relevant scale of voter engagement work. Relevant scale is exhibited by local organizations as well as those that have a national affiliation. For example:

- **Inner City Struggle** increased turnout in the June election in Los Angeles County by 9 percent, compared to precincts in the county in which they did not work. Inner City Struggle has identified a base of 36,000 low-income voters since its voter engagement programs began in 2009.
- **Communities United** (formerly Albany Park Neighborhood Council) knocked on more than 42,000 doors in Chicago to educate and turn voters out on raising the minimum wage, and collected 3,000 signatures to put an initiative on the ballot to change Chicago’s school board.
- **New Era Colorado**⁹ registered more than 28,000 voters, representing 22 percent of all new voters on the rolls in Colorado in 2014.
- **SouthWest Organizing Project**¹⁰ targeted 20,000 voters on the doors and phones, including a 75-person door-knock, staffed largely by high school- and college-aged youth.
- **Forward Montana Foundation**¹¹ created a statewide vote share of 2.2 percent (voters contacted as a percentage of total votes cast), even though its work was not done throughout the entire state. A vote share of 5 percent is considered to be the gold standard for nonpartisan voter engagement.
- **MOVE San Antonio**¹² created a vote share of 2.5 percent in Bexar County.
- **Youth Empowered in the Struggle**, the youth arm of Voces de la Frontera, created a vote share of 3.7 percent in Racine County, Wisconsin.
- **Neighborhoods Organizing for Change in Minneapolis**¹³, led largely by young people, knocked on more than 17,000 doors and identified almost 14,000 supporters.

These results are commensurate with those of the best civic engagement organizations in the country, regardless of age, due in no small part to adherence to the characteristics outlined in the Introduction to this paper: young people working in their own communities; year-round engagement; training, political education, and leadership development; working collaboratively; and having a strategy for building power.

With development and resourcing based on the characteristics outlined earlier, many more youth groups are poised to become the next Inner City Struggle or New Era Colorado. It is our collective task to identify and support them.

“Inner City Struggle is one of the strongest anchor organizations for California Calls. They are one of the most reliable organizations we work with in terms of executing a voter engagement plan and mobilizing an army of volunteers.”

*Sabrina Smith, Deputy Director,
California Calls*

Recommendation #2:
The civic engagement sector should double down on youth organizing groups with a proven track record in executing large-scale voter engagement programs and identify others with the potential to scale up.

9. Bus Federation affiliate
10. National People’s Action affiliate
11. Bus Federation affiliate
12. Bus Federation affiliate
13. Center for Popular Democracy affiliate

3

Shape the Millennial Generation

through highly visible and emotional “moment to movement” campaigns, primarily using communications and organizing methods.

Recommendation #3:

Youth organizing groups should shape the Millennial Generation through highly visible and emotional “moment to movement” campaigns, primarily using communications and organizing methods

Many youth organizing groups tend to have smaller voter universes than the examples cited above – measured in the hundreds or thousands, not in the tens of thousands. However, they serve an important role in the civic engagement ecosystem. Toward the common goal of shaping this Millennial Generation, perhaps these youth organizing groups should prioritize a second archetype of engaging Millennials: the “moment to movement” approach, pioneered by Color of Change and others, which involves taking flashpoints in current events and turning them into social movement opportunities. This approach – done in addition to, not in replacement of, direct voter contact – relies on earned and social media, on-the-ground organizing, high-visibility events, and most importantly, sustainable organizations able to manage and accelerate these efforts. This approach has the potential to politicize young people in great numbers and with high emotional investment, using youth peers as messengers.

This strategy also maximizes the passion of young people when movement moments happen. From the Vietnam War to the Iraq War, from the Civil Rights sit-ins to Ferguson to Eric Garner, young people energize, and are energized by, flashpoints.

Moment to Movement: Ohio

The Ohio Student Association was poised in 2014 to conduct a large-scale youth voter engagement program, based on direct voter contact. But on August 5, 2014, just weeks before the voter engagement campaign launch, police shot and killed John Crawford inside a Walmart store near Dayton, Ohio. The killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, happened four days later. OSA quickly sprung into action with highly visible demonstrations and marches, ultimately generating more than 500 media stories. Kirk Noden, Executive Director of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, the umbrella organization for OSA, noted that while OSA’s direct voter contact work dropped off, OSA was able to reach and educate thousands of Millennials and non-Millennials alike in Ohio through social and earned media and direct action, leading to a meeting with President Obama.

Moment to Movement: Chicago

In 2008, a youth member of Communities United was living in a building that just recently had been foreclosed without the knowledge of the tenants in the building. Sheriffs entered the building and forced residents out, many of whom did not speak English. Communities United quickly mobilized direct actions and earned media, targeting the Cook County Sheriff, ultimately forcing him to commit to not evict any tenants and impose a first-ever temporary moratorium on foreclosure evictions, receiving international attention. Through the high visibility of this campaign, a local alderman – who had once opposed Communities United on this issue – worked with youth and adult leaders to pass a groundbreaking ordinance requiring banks to offer leases to tenants of foreclosed units or relocation assistance. Communities United was able to politicize young and older adults alike through this campaign.

These flashpoints often affect the values and views of non-youth, as well. In addition to corralling this passion into knocking on doors and making phone calls, youth organizing groups could make as a primary purpose the nationalization of local fights, in order to change the political consciousness of the Millennial Generation.¹⁴

Hand in hand with the moment-to-movement approach is the recruitment and training of articulate and passionate new spokespeople. Youth groups already are leading the way. In just this election cycle, OSA trained 57 new, young spokespeople and Forward Montana Foundation trained 64 spokespeople. Combined with aggressive organizing and social media, this moment-to-movement approach provides the civic engagement sector with a potent combination to communicate on a much larger and more persuasive scale to the full electorate.

A promising new strategy has emerged in youth organizing – reaching Millennials through highly visible, media-driven activities. This new strategy needs to be codified and perhaps connected to new training curricula and methods, to assist more youth organizing groups in its application.

14. Changing political consciousness can be measured through regular public opinion polling. The Pew Charitable Trusts and others have conducted this research for decades.

Formalize a leadership pipeline for 21st century organizers and related professions – a longstanding gap in the sector – and develop methods to track youth alumni.

As studies have documented¹⁵, young people who go through a youth organizing experience are more civically engaged when they grow older. FCYO, in particular, has focused historically and extensively on the impacts of youth-leadership development and identified methods to build these intentional pathways. As Seema Shah¹⁶ points out,

More than 90 percent of young people in our survey expressed a desire to stay involved in activism, and nearly 80 percent planned to find a job in the field of organizing. Ninety percent of students planned to learn more about politics in the future and nearly 40 percent thought they might run for political office one day.

The civic engagement sector rightly critiques the lack of a leadership bench within its organizations and campaigns. Youth organizing organizations provide a built-in solution to this long-standing problem.

Alumni of youth organizing groups are articulate, have a political lens, exhibit leadership skills, and believe in their ability to enact change. But often, a key challenge in moving these young leaders into staff positions at non-youth organizations is the

lack of a formal connection between non-youth organizations and these up-and-coming young leaders. When 14-18 year olds leave their youth organizations, they often go to school. Many may become student organizers on campus. Upon finishing, they may have lost connection with, or do not even know, the non-youth groups prepared to hire them into full-time positions.

Sabrina Smith at California Calls notes that many of the youth organizing internships in the 1990s no longer exist. “We had CTWO’s MAAP (Center for Third World Organizing – Movement Activist Apprenticeship Program) program and other efforts that introduced a host of young people of color to civic engagement organizations and labor unions that could hire them. That link is now a gap.”

In addition to MAAP, several other organizations have played a role in this pipeline. Young People For, New Leaders Council, and the former Center for Progressive Leadership have attempted to fill this gap. But overall, funding is lacking. In 2006, conservatives maintained a 4:1 spending advantage on youth-leadership development¹⁷. By 2010, the spending gap had shrunk slightly, but conservatives still dominated, outspending progressives \$77 million to \$29 million.¹⁸ Conservatives are reaping the benefits of this spending advantage now and will continue to

do so as the Millennial Generation ages over the next several decades, unless the civic engagement sector intervenes more forcefully.

To put this lost opportunity in context, following are a sample of leadership development activities conducted in 2014 by youth organizations participating in this research project:

- *The Ohio Student Association (OSA) activated 1,821 young people this election cycle.*
- *Forward Montana Foundation activated 1,049 young people.*
- *New Era Colorado, Forward Montana Foundation, and OSA each generated more than 4,000 hours of volunteerism through door-knocking, phoning, and site-based voter engagement work.*
- *Communities United activated 400 youth and adults and trained 60 new spokespeople this cycle.*

In just these few examples, youth organizing groups have identified, recruited and trained an enormous pool of potential organizers, campaign managers, and community leaders for non-youth organizations. Every youth group interviewed for this paper ticked off a list of youth alumni who now work at non-youth organizations, labor unions, and other key roles within civic engagement and organizing. But in almost every case, the matchmaking between the trained young person and her or his future employer was done on an episodic, case-by-case basis.

Communities United youth engage voters on the issues that matter



15. Rogers, J., & Terriquez, V. (2013). Learning to Lead: The Impact of Youth Organizing on the Educational and Civic Trajectories of Low-Income Youth. Los Angeles, CA: Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access; Shah, Seema. (May 2011). Building Transformative Youth Leadership: Data on the Impacts of Youth Organizing. Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing.; Ginwright, Shawn. (May 2010). Building a Pipeline for Justice: Understanding Youth Organizing and the Leadership Pipeline. Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

16. Shah, p. 23.

17. Young People For. (April 10, 2006). Investing in Long-Term Leadership Development.

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SWOP's intergenerational canvas kicks off

The civic engagement sector needs a state-based, systematic approach to a leadership pipeline that will not only place youth leaders into seasoned organizer positions but also help transition the staff of youth organizations into non-youth organizations when they are ready to move on.

Californians for Justice (CFJ), a statewide organization whose staff is largely young people of color, typified this approach in the late 1990s and early 2000s. CFJ was not only the largest, most effective youth group then – it was also one of the highest-capacity field organizations in the state. Because of their strategic and high-impact work on ballot initiative and issue campaigns, CFJ staff and leaders had deep relationships with non-youth organizations, creating a natural pipeline for CFJ youth – relationships they still carry forward to this day.

A formal, systematic approach to building relationships among youth leaders and the non-youth organizations that may one day hire them could involve elements such as:

- *Paid (or school credited) school-year and summer internships at non-youth organizations for young leaders from youth organizing groups.*
- *State-based (or city-based) youth leadership networks with deep involvement from non-youth organizations as trainers, facilitators, or presenters.*
- *Regular planning meetings and training sessions in which youth organizations and non-youth organizations both participate and plan together.*

If non-youth organizations are to reap the benefits of the deep leadership development efforts of youth organizing groups, then a deliberate effort to build personal relationships with those youth leaders should be established .

A Network of Support:

The Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC) launched the Ohio Student Association in 2012. OSA is an integrated part of OOC's statewide network. OSA's key leaders and staff attend OOC's week-long training program, regular strategic planning sessions, and campaign debriefings, building strong relationships between youth leaders and non-youth organizations.

A cost-effective intervention is assisting youth organizations to better track and stay in contact with their alumni. This problem is shared and acknowledged by virtually all youth organizations. Through a combination of technology and technical assistance, youth organizations can dramatically increase their ability to stay in touch with and assist youth alumni, helping to continue shaping the worldview and engagement of these alumni into their adult years.

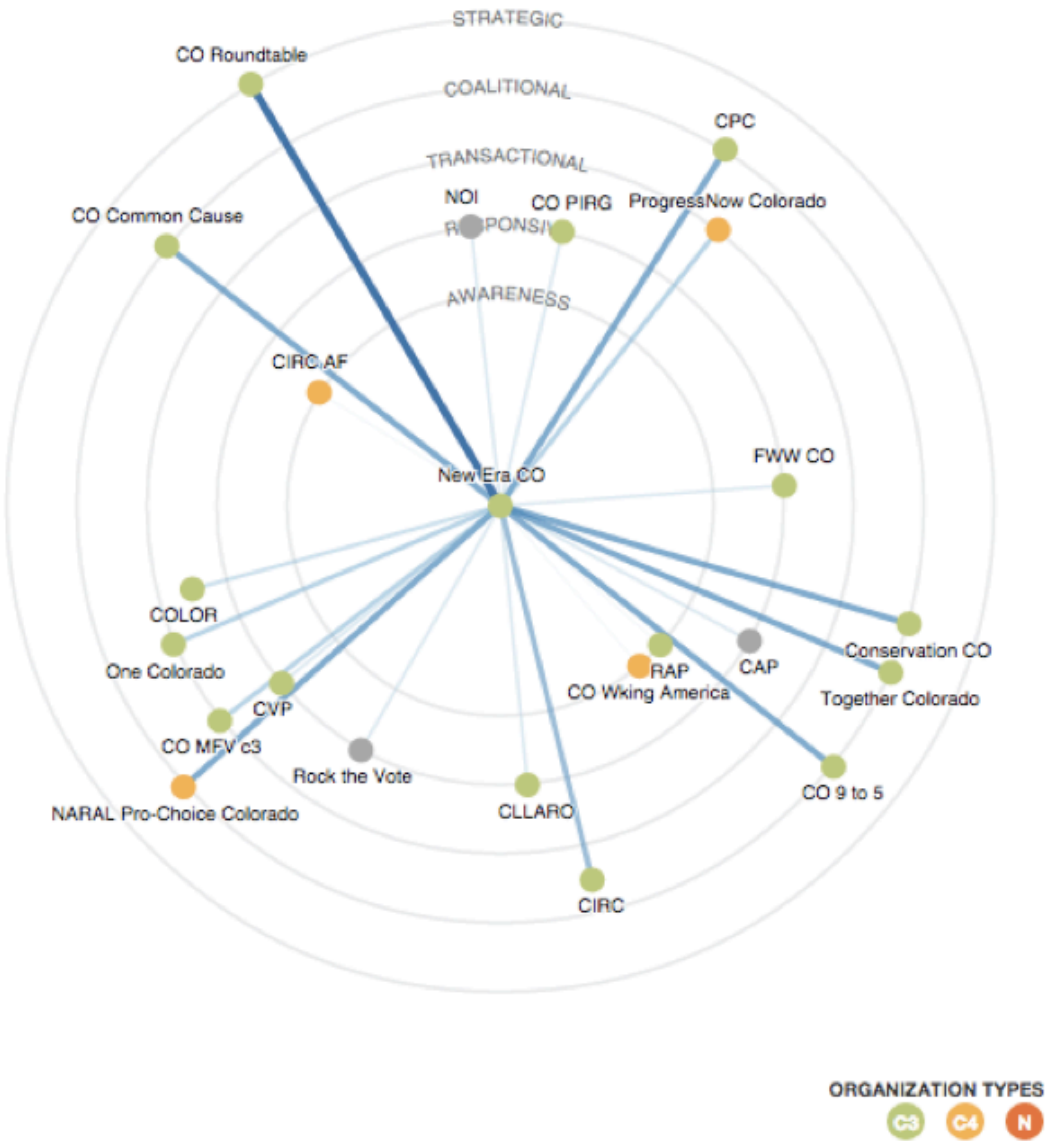
“Our staff spends time and resources to stay in touch with our youth alumni, helping them get into college and do well in school. But we are now 20 years old as an organization. We need resources and assistance to improve our database and help formalize our alumni network.”

Maria Brenes, Executive Director, Inner City Struggle, Los Angeles

To further illuminate the possibility for a more formalized structure, the following data visualization uses social-network analysis by Quadrant Metrics to examine the depth and breadth of relationships among organizations . The concentric circles represent the quality of relationships between organizations, using the following scale:

- **STRATEGIC**: full, year-round collaboration with shared decision-making and clear divisions of labor (outermost ring)
- **COALITIONAL**: campaign-oriented, short-term partnerships on specific projects
- **TRANSACTIONAL**: regular, reciprocal exchanges on an as-needed basis
- **RESPONSIVE**: occasional assistance when requested
- **AWARENESS**: knowledge of one another but little to no interaction
- **None**: no knowledge of one another

In this example, taken from Q3 2014, New Era Colorado has strong relationships (i.e. strategic or coalitional) with key civic engagement partners in the state, such as the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable, the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, 9 to 5, Together Colorado, Conservation Colorado, the Colorado Progressive Coalition, Common Cause, and NARAL. New Era could develop long-term partnerships with some or all of these organizations with internship programs, joint training sessions, and other activities designed to develop relationships between these non-youth organizations and New Era’s up-and-coming youth leaders.



Recommendation #4:
Youth organizing organizations and non-youth organizations should create partnerships to formalize a leadership pipeline for 21st century organizers and related professions —a longstanding gap in the sector – and develop methods to track youth alumni.

19. For a more detailed discussion of a leadership pipeline, see Ginwright. The Ecology of a Pipeline for Social Justice Leaders. (May 2010). p. 16. Retrieved from http://www.fcyo.org/media/docs/6252_FCYO_OPS_10_ScreenVersion.pdf
20. Quadrant Metrics. Q3 2014.

21. Bus Federation affiliate
22. State Voices affiliate
23. PICO affiliate
24. National People’s Action affiliate

Recommendations

It is our belief that the field of youth organizing, with these recommendations, can demonstrably strengthen the civic engagement sector’s ability to achieve more and lasting wins.

This Millennial Generation – both voters and leaders – is up for grabs.

But to fine-tune and eventually operationalize these recommendations, many more conversations need to happen – among practitioners, funders, and sector leaders. We advocate strongly for these conversations to happen in a formal way in 2015 so we may collectively begin to lay the groundwork for impact in 2016, 2018, and 2020, culminating in a reshaped battlefield for 2021 redistricting fights and beyond.

Its impact and influence will last for five decades. It’s now or never to win the hearts and minds of the Millennial Generation.

Will we win this race or not?

Resources are tighter everywhere. Greater alignment is needed across the entire civic engagement sector, not just within youth organizing. Following are the four recommendations on youth organizing’s impact, for consideration by youth organizing groups, non-youth civic engagement organizations, and funders interested in supporting youth organizing and civic engagement. Under each recommendation, we have suggested concrete steps to implement each recommendation. It is our hope that each recommendation can be considered as a pilot project to test the potential and impact of these recommendations.

1

Recommendation #1: The civic engagement sector should identify youth-focused strategic initiatives that can drive public discourse, as a way to change the issue environment for elections and policy fights.

- In key states in which Millennials are trending conservatively, conduct public opinion research to identify youth-focused issues that can become powerful strategic initiatives and identify youth organizing groups with the ability to play lead roles in efforts to engage voters and impact policy fights.

2

Recommendation #2: The civic engagement sector should double down on youth organizing groups with a proven track record in executing large-scale voter engagement programs and identify others with the potential to scale up.

- Continue support for high-capacity youth organizing groups and, in key states, aggressively identify those that meet the characteristics identified in the Introduction to this paper that are on the cusp of high-capacity performance.

3

Recommendation #3: Youth organizing groups should shape the Millennial Generation through highly visible and emotional “moment to movement” campaigns, primarily using communications and organizing methods.

- Provide training and resources to experiment with a “moment-to-movement” approach.

4

Recommendation #4: Youth organizing organizations and non-youth organizations should create partnerships to formalize a leadership pipeline for 21st century organizers and related professions – a longstanding gap in the sector – and develop methods to track youth alumni.

- Test how to formalize leadership pipelines that systematically build relationships between non-youth organizations and young leaders whom they may hire in several years. Include technical assistance to develop systems to track and communicate with youth alumni.

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Appendix: List of Interviews, Data Sources and Reviewers

- Alexandra Acker-Lyons, Director, Youth Engagement Fund
- Jenny Arwade, Executive Director, Communities United (formerly Albany Park Neighborhood Council)
- Javier Benavidez, Executive Director, SouthWest Organizing Project
- Hannah Beck, Executive Director, MOVE San Antonio
- Lori Bezahler, Executive Director, Edward W. Hazen Foundation
- Ludovic Blain, Director, Color of Democracy
- Kayje Booker, CEO, Forward Montana Foundation
- Maria Brenes, Executive Director, Inner City Struggle
- George Cheung, Senior Program Officer, Democracy Program, Joyce Foundation
- Steven Cole-Schwartz, Director, the Partnership Fund
- Juan Cruz, Education Organizer, Communities United (formerly Albany Park Neighborhood Council)
- Steve Fenberg, Executive Director, New Era Colorado
- Tory Gavito, Executive Director, Texas Future Project
- Linda Honold, Strategic Advisor, the Brico Fund
- Stephanie Maez, Chief Executive Officer, Center for Civic Policy
- Albert Maldonado, Program Officer, California Endowment
- Pam Martinez, Co-Executive Director, Padres y Jovenes Unidos
- Eduardo Morales, the Democracy Alliance
- Anthony Newby, Executive Director, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (MN)
- Kirk Noden, Executive Director, Ohio Organizing Collaborative
- Sean Orr, Lead Youth Organizer, Youth Empowered in the Struggle of Voces de la Frontera
- Elsa Oliva Rocha, Director of Operations, Padres y Jovenes Unidos
- Robby Rodriguez, Program Officer for New Mexico Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Emma Sandoval, Youth Organizer, SouthWest Organizing Project
- Sabrina Smith, Campaign Director, California Calls
- Megan Van Ens, Executive Director, Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable
- Bill Vandenberg, Director, U.S. Special Initiatives and Partnerships, Open Society Foundations



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