MICHIGAN VOICE

OCTOBER 2020 **MID-YEAR NEWSLETTER**

DOING THE WORK

Pictured: Detroit Change Initiative

ON THE GROUND: PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS

APIA VOTE MI

OAKLAND FORWARD **URBAN CORE COLLECTIVE**

LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

Dear Friends,

First of all, Sommer and I would like to introduce ourselves.

Sommer Foster is the co-executive director/chief operating officer of Michigan Voices. Previously, she was the political director of For Our Future Action Fund - Michigan and the director of political advocacy at Equality Michigan. In 2016, she was elected as the first African American to serve on the Canton Township Board of Trustees. She has spent her career working for progressive causes in various capacities as an organizer, legislative advocate, and as an elected official. She has worked on and managed campaigns for races from Congress to state representative to school board.

SOMMER FOSTER, CO-DIRECTOR

Tameka Ramsey is the co-executive director/ CEO of Michigan Voices. Tameka served as the interim director of Michigan Voices prior to coming on board as the co-director. Prior to Michigan Voices, Tameka co-founded social justice organization Pontiac Policy Council to fill a gap of injustice in Pontiac. As the convener of Black Women's Roundtable of Eastern Michigan, Tameka has made it her mission to lift up Black women in business, education, health and wellness, and in leadership.

TAMEKA RAMSEY, CO-DIRECTOR

As the first-ever co-directors of Michigan Voices, we are committed to building the table that we all need. Investing in grass-seed and grass-top organizations; while moving forward to build an equitable community among our table partners. We are not doing this alone.

With our growing staff, who are all experts in their field, the Michigan Voices team will continue to help support, train and work with our table partners to build capacity, membership and POWER.

MEET OUR TEAM

SHARVIN LEE,
DATA & TARGETING MANAGER

EDEN ZIMAK,
DATA ASSOCIATE

MELANIE MCELROY,
DEMOCRACY MANAGER

JACINDA CASON,
FIELD DIRECTOR

JORDAN BELLANT,
VR/GOTV COORDINATOR

TAMI REY,
VR/GOTV QUALITY CONTROL

SHANAY WATSON-WHITTAKER,
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

MAKINI KWELI,
OPERATIONS MANAGER

TANITH RICE,
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

ON THE GROUND:

Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote Michigan

(HAMTRAMCK, HMONG, KOREAN) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ON THE GROUND:

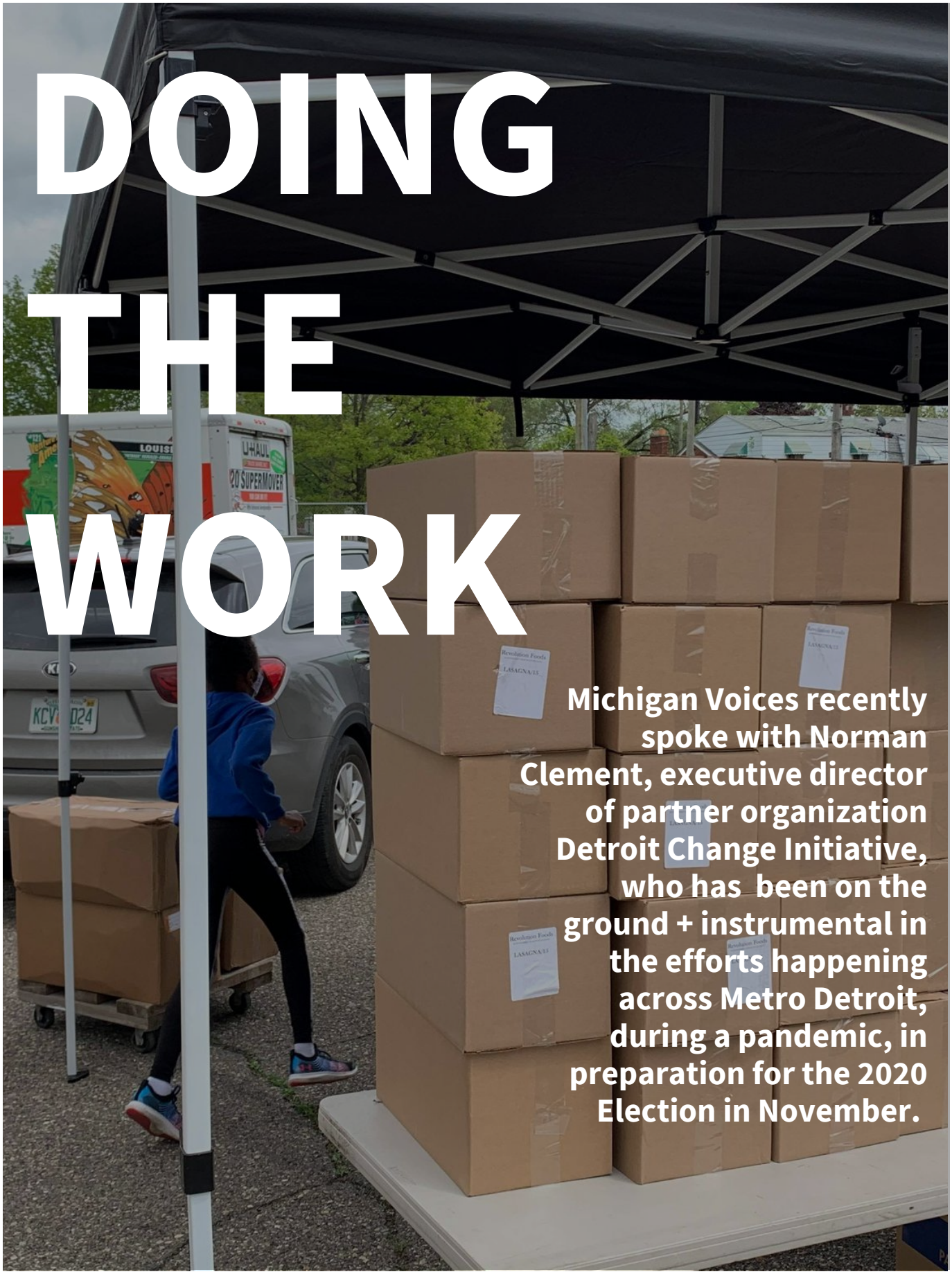
Oakland FORWARD

AT THE POLLS, CENSUS 2020 + COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

ON THE GROUND:

URBAN CORE COLLECTIVE

VOTER REGISTRATION: FEED THE BLOCK + FARMER'S MARKET



DOING THE WORK

Michigan Voices recently spoke with Norman Clement, executive director of partner organization Detroit Change Initiative, who has been on the ground + instrumental in the efforts happening across Metro Detroit, during a pandemic, in preparation for the 2020 Election in November.

Who or what inspired you to start your organization?
Going to the “We Shall Not Be Moved Rally” in D.C. in January 2017 was my moment. Joe Madison asked us one question: “WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?”. So, I got mad, went back home, planned and laid down the groundwork for DCI.

How did you get started?
I have been working in the nonprofit space for 16 years. I spent a significant amount of my career managing YouthVille Detroit’s resource facilities, including scheduling, inventory, program marketing and event coordination for our Leadership Development Center. My favorite part was supervising youth specialists in implementation of special and educational programs. I had the best mentors in Dr. Gerald K. Smith, Judy Jackson, Anthony Thompson, Lynn Burrdell, Vincent Brown, Rita Clark and Phil Sherman. They taught me youth development is done on the ground, with the youth, in the community you are trying to impact.

What advice would you give to young leaders following in your footsteps?
You have a choice and the power to do something! Complaining on social media and getting likes is not activism. Power to change our communities is within our circle.

What is your favorite quote?
“One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.” - Plato

PARTNER PROGRAMMING

What, if any, Michigan Voices partnership programs are you currently active in?
DCI is working with Michigan Voices partnership for Census 2020, Election Protection, Voter Registration and Get Out the Vote.

How has becoming a Michigan Voices partner helped your organization?
The Leadership at Michigan Voices has been outstanding. They value our efforts and meet us where we are. But what I love most about this partnership is they advocate our needs to the funders.

COVID-19

How has COVID-19 impacted your organization's partnership with Michigan Voices and the people you serve?
It has impacted us greatly. We had several events that were cancelled

due to the pandemic. Our communities were hit hard with lack of testing, unemployment and more Black and Brown people not only getting sick, but dying, too. DCI changed our engagement approach from having voter registration rallies at schools, concerts and festivals, to meeting the people where they were at, while practicing social distancing. Now, our engagement strategy is built around other types of community events like food banks, more technology-based encounters through texts and social media, and more word-of-mouth. We also went to local businesses to ask if they wanted to be involved with this movement by encouraging customers to update their voter registration and get out the vote.

What program changes have you made in response to COVID-19?

Covid challenged us to think outside the box. We were able to engage citizens through food giveaways, social media meetups on Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts. DCI is now using an all-digital voter registration platform. When

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shops were able to safely re-open, DCI began partnering with several business owners to allow us to place signage with voter registration QR codes in their stores.

What is the feeling on the ground? What do your constituents need?

Feelings of anger, depression, stress and motivation. A whirlwind of emotions from folks who lost their jobs by no fault of their own. People have lost loved ones they weren't able to be with during their final hours. I also see determination from folks who want to take action in their communities. COVID-19 has shown the country the health disparities underserved communities have known too well.

Racism in policies, such as in policing, have put people of color (and our allies) on high alert. The time to take action is now!

Has COVID-19 impacted your organization's short- and/or long-term goals?
No, not at all. It actually makes us want to focus more on policy changes that affect everyday hard-working Americans. We are also extremely excited to begin introducing youth to community participation with changing policy, voter registration and political engagement.

What can Michigan Voices do to help you accomplish your goals?
Keep advocating for grassroots and grass-seed nonprofits. Michigan Voices sees the work we do on a daily basis, and helps us take our vision to scale.

How has COVID-19 impacted you?
Sometimes I get depressed, but my children deserve a better future than I had, so I press forward.

SUCCESSES

How would you describe success in 2020?
When children are safe, our communities have better resources and policies to support it.

Can you tell us about a successful event(s) you've had in the last six months?
Several Voter Registrations and food drives, Voter Education outreach at Belle Isle and with DPSDC parents. Voter Registration at sneakers drops and upscale fashion shops like The Upperow, Bob Classic Kicks, Three Thirteen, New Birth Barber Shop, Detroit Ink Spot and Sound Mind Sound Body.

BY THE NUMBERS

(DATA FROM THE FIELD)

YTD: TOTAL

173,671

CONVERSATIONS

539,668

ATTEMPTS

CALLS AND TEXTS

150,786

CANVASSED

361,735

ATTEMPTS

21,365

CANVASSED

176,195

ATTEMPTS

BY THE NUMBERS
(CON'T)

BREAKDOWN: STATEWIDE

CONVERSATIONS		ATTEMPTS
37, 332	**DETROIT**	130,192
6,836	**GRAND RAPIDS**	30,137
3,183	**KALAMAZOO**	21,109
2,035	**SAGINAW**	3,883
1,437	**CALHOUN COUNTY**	1,959
4,862	**INGHAM COUNTY**	8,081
324	**ISABELLA COUNTY**	510
777	**JACKSON COUNTY**	1,147
2,002	**KALAMAZOO COUNTY**	10,073
6,210	**KENT COUNTY**	26,680
15,886	**MACOMB COUNTY**	58,066
30,168	**OAKLAND COUNTY**	93,625
1,184	**SAGINAW COUNTY**	2,134
9,218	**WASHTENAW COUNTY**	20,948
34,710	**WAYNE COUNTY**	78,488

BREAKDOWN: DEMOGRAPHIC

2020:CATALIST:VOTEPROP	TOTAL PEOPLE
0 TO 9.99	23,539
10 TO 19.99	51,594
20 TO 29.99	29,925
30 TO 39.99	26,372
40 TO 49.99	24,243
50 TO 59.99	21,796
60 TO 69.99	25,784
70 TO 79.99	34,268
80 TO 89.99	54,587
90+	149,053
UNKNOWN	**13,532**
TOTAL PEOPLE	**454,693**

MICHIGAN VOICES PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

ACCESS
ACLU
American Federation of Teachers MI
A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI)- Statewide
APRI -Battle Creek
APRI -Downriver
APRI -Flint
APRI -Grand Rapids
APRI -Kalamazoo
APRI -Lansing
APRI -Metro Detroit
APRI -Muskegon
APRI -Saginaw
Arab American Heritage Council
Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) Vote MI
Better Men Outreach
Building Movement - Peoples Platform Detroit
Detroit Action
Detroit Change Initiative
Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation
Economic Justice Alliance of Michigan (EJAM)
Empowered Voices
Greater Kingdom International
Hip Hop Caucus
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
League of Women Voters of MI
LGBT Detroit
M.A.D.E Institute
Michigan Coalition on Black Civic Participation
Michigan Education Justice Coalition (MEJC)
Michigan Faith in Action
Michigan League For Conservation Voters
Michigan League for Public Policy
Michigan Liberation
Michigan Nonprofit Association
Michigan United
Mothering Justice
Mothers of Hope
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nazarene Community Outreach
One Love Global
One Michigan for the Global Majority
Our Own Wall Street
Planned Parenthood Advocates Michigan
Pontiac Policy Council
Oakland Forward
Progress Michigan
Student PIRGs (Public Interest Research Group) MI
Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice
Southwest Michigan Urban League
United Way
Western Wayne County NAACP Branch
Wisdom Institute
WMEAC

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