race forward
THE CENTER FOR **RACIAL JUSTICE** INNOVATION

MOVING THE RACE CONVERSATION FORWARD

RACIAL DISCOURSE CHANGE IN PRACTICE

PART 2

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PROLOGUE

Moving the Race Conversation Forward is a two-part report that first, describes some of the major impediments to productive racial discourse in the United States, and second, profiles and provides lessons from several recent interventions and initiatives that are breaking down significant barriers toward racial justice.

PART ONE: HOW THE MEDIA COVERS RACISM, AND OTHER BARRIERS TO PRODUCTIVE RACIAL DISCOURSE, identifies and describes some of the key ways in which mainstream discourse in the United States unproductively approaches issues of race and racism. In this report, we present our expansive analysis of recent media coverage on race and racism (Section 2), and our description of Seven Harmful Racial Discourse Practices that occur not just in mainstream media, but in varied spaces where "race talk" takes place (Section 3). It also provides some everyday discourse recommendations applicable to everyone from racial and social justice advocates to media editors to leaders and members of religious groups to news consumers.

PART TWO: RACIAL DISCOURSE CHANGE IN PRACTICE provides case studies and profiles of recent interventions and initiatives advanced by the racial justice field to disrupt and supplant the unproductive mainstream discussions of race and racism. The cases include a campaign entitled "Drop The I-Word," launched in September 2010 by Race Forward itself (at the time still known as the Applied Research Center). This second report also provides lessons gleaned from these interventions and initiatives, perhaps most applicable to racial and social justice advocates, but also relevant to others who are eager to respond to the dominant frames and stories that negatively impact people of color, and/or to *proactively* advance values and narratives that will lead our society toward a racially equitable future. These lessons are accompanied by important considerations for organizations to bear in mind when selecting spokespersons for racial equity communications. And finally, we also provide recommendations for those wondering how to best address the current needs and opportunities to support the development of framing expertise, skills-building and collaboration.

While each report stands on its own, we hope that many readers will explore both, and engage with us and others who are reshaping and reforming the way we talk about race and racism in our country today and into the future.

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SECTION 1: Introduction
Moving the Race Conversation Forward

Race Forward defines racial justice as the *"systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone."* Achieving meaningful and large-scale influence over the mainstream racial discourse will involve not only reacting to the key, harmful aspects of that discourse, but also proactively sharing a vision of what racial justice looks like. Through a series of case studies and profiles, this report highlights major interventions and initiatives advanced recently by the racial justice field through the realms of policy, media, and culture. While we have concentrated largely on the issues of immigration, criminal justice, and education, the case studies and profiles that follow, stand as informative models that can be adapted to a variety of contexts in order to inspire fresh ways to re-focus the typical narrative arc on race and racism to one that helps produce racially just outcomes for all.

The recent interventions and initiatives included in this report are:

- Race Forward's **"Drop the I-Word" campaign**, which directly confronted the use of the term "illegal" to refer to out-of-status immigrants in media coverage, culminating in the Associated Press dropping the term from its influential style guide.

- Artist Favianna Rodriguez' *Migration is Beautiful* **imagery,** which reclaims the migrant community's human dignity in the face of racially biased discourse and policy and has become a go-to tool for immigrant rights activists on the ground.

- ColorofChange.org's "**ALEC on the run" campaign**, which has enjoyed success in urging divestment from the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a powerful lobby of corporations. ALEC's exploitation of the dominant, racist frame in the realm of criminal justice to promote unjust policies, such as "Stand Your Ground" laws, garnered national attention in the wake of the shooting death of Trayvon Martin.

- Filmmaker Ryan Coogler's *Fruitvale Station*, a critically acclaimed and popularly received film which powerfully restores humanity to young black men such as Oscar Grant, an unarmed 22-year old son, partner, father, and friend who was shot and killed on a train platform by a transit police officer.

- The Advancement Project's **campaign to end the 'Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse" track,** which has experienced success reversing the course of zero-tolerance school discipline policies and approaches that disproportionately and devastatingly criminalize young people of color.

How Race Forward defines Racial Justice:

Systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.

From these selected interventions and initiatives, and from our training and consulting experience at Race Forward, we extract generally applicable lessons and recommendations for racial and social justice advocates and anyone else seeking to reframe racial discourse and/or policy in this country toward racial justice, or otherwise support the growing movement of people who are doing this important work. We also provide important considerations for anyone involved in selecting messengers, or other spokespersons, for inclusive racial justice framing.

Before we present the interventions and initiatives case studies and profiles, we reprint several key terms in our organizational work and for this report, which were introduced in Part One.

KEY TERMS USED IN OUR WORK AND IN THIS REPORT
Race Forward's Levels of Racism
During the course of our three decades of in-person trainings and consulting for clients of various backgrounds and fields of work, Race Forward has developed definitions for "Four Levels of Racism" — two within the individual level of racism and two within the systemic level — that we re-introduce here. The key distinction is between the two levels of racism, individual and systemic. While we acknowledge the impact of individual acts of racial discrimination, we believe that it is critical to do so within a deeper analysis of systemic racial injustice.

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INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL RACISM

INTERNALIZED RACISM lies within individuals. These are our private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by our culture. Internalized racism can take many different forms including racial prejudice toward other people of a different race; internalized oppression, the negative beliefs about oneself by people of color; or internalized privilege, beliefs about superiority or entitlement by white people. An example is a belief that you or others are more or less intelligent, or beautiful, because of your race.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM occurs between individuals. These are biases that occur when individuals interact with others and their private racial beliefs affect their public interactions. Examples include racial slurs, bigotry, hate crimes, and racial violence.

SYSTEMIC-LEVEL RACISM

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM occurs within institutions and systems of power. It is the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, workplaces, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities. An example is a school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded schools, the least-challenging classes, and the least-qualified teachers, resulting in higher dropout rates and disciplinary rates compared with that of white students.

STRUCTURAL RACISM is racial bias among institutions and across society. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. An example is the overwhelming number of depictions of people of color as criminals in mainstream media, which can influence how various institutions and individuals treat people of color with suspicion when they are shopping, traveling, or seeking housing and employment – all of which can result in discriminatory treatment and unequal outcomes.

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

What it is and why it's needed — Because the popular notion of racism is narrowly focused on personal prejudice and racial animus, a more complete analysis and presentation of race-related developments is needed. When racial dynamics are not sufficiently contextualized, it is easy to fall into the trap of victim blaming. A systems analysis adds context, reveals root causes and contributing factors, and surfaces possible corresponding solutions. A systems analysis involves an examination of questions: What institutional policies and practices are involved? What are the historical underpinnings and cumulative inequities? What cultural norms and popular ideas are reinforcing the problem? What is causing the racial inequities and tensions and what are possible solutions? If racial justice advocates adopt a routine and robust use of a systems analysis to inform our work — and the way we publicly communicate our issues — we can be a model for other advocates and journalists to do the same.

FRAMING DEFINITIONS

While definitions for the following key strategic communications terms vary, Race Forward offers the following interconnected definitions in the interest of providing clarity to our readers and in the spirit of fostering alignment to promote racial justice in national conversations on race.

A frame is a lens or worldview, often unconscious, through which human beings see an issue or problem. Frames are related to social cognition processes encoded in our brains that help us quickly make sense of complex information, and then make individual and collective decisions on that basis. These processes generate deeply embedded perspectives that are easily activated in the subconscious, especially through devices like images, stories, stereotypes and slogans. Framing for communication is a more active process than simply recognizing existing frames of cognition. When frames are applied to a social problem, they lead to conclusions about the nature of that problem, the responsibilities of various parties, potential solutions, and the actions required.

Narratives, whether real, exaggerated, or fictionalized, are specific stories used to convey or reinforce a given frame. Narratives must include characters (e.g. protagonist, antagonist, heroes, villains), settings (context, time, place), action (interconnected events that change the situation, leading to a climax and resolution), and a core idea that grounds the story.

Messages are the takeaway from frames and narratives that point to the specific action needed. At their best, messages are concise, memorable and "sound-bite"-ready, flowing logically from the corresponding narratives and frames.

Readers with a particular interest in these framing terms can find key examples of their use in practice throughout the report by taking note of the accompanying icons, featured in the margins throughout this report.

= FRAME

= NARRATIVES

= MESSAGES

EXAMPLE OF OPPOSING FRAMES, NARRATIVES AND MESSAGES WITHIN IMMIGRATION DISCOURSE:

Frame: Law & Order vs. Human Dignity

Narrative: Broke the Law vs. Harmed by Bias

Message: Only use the word 'illegal' when describing immigrants vs. Use alternatives

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SECTION 2:
Racial Justice Interventions and Initiatives

CASE STUDY: Race Forward—Drop the I-Word Campaign
PROFILE: Migration is Beautiful Initiative
CASE STUDY: Color of Change
PROFILE: *Fruitvale Station* Film
PROFILE: Campaign to End the Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse track

RACE FORWARD—DROP THE I-WORD CAMPAIGN   CASE STUDY

Focusing on immigration as a matter of human dignity rather than solely one of law and order.

In 2008, an Ecuadoran immigrant Marcelo Lucero was fatally stabbed by a high school student in Patchogue, a small suburb of New York City. His killer was a young white man who, along with six friends, made a sport of violence against Mexicans and homeless people. During their trials, a witness testified that among the many epithets they hurled at Lucero was "f------ illegal." Lucero's murder represented the most extreme usage of a word that has become the bane of not just immigrant lives, but those of other people of color who might be mistaken for being in the United States without permission. By the late 2000's, the I-word, relentlessly pushed by immigration restrictionists, had become ubiquitous and normalized, despite ongoing debate about its accuracy and neutrality.

Two years later in the fall of 2010, Race Forward (at the time still known as the Applied Research Center) and Colorlines launched the Drop the I-Word campaign to reframe the immigration policy debate, focusing on immigration as a matter of human dignity rather than solely one of law and order. Working with partners to run an inside-outside strategy to change the editorial policies of media outlets, the campaign ultimately got the Associated Press (AP) to take "illegal immigrant" out of its stylebook in April 2013. USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, The Denver Post and other outlets joined the AP within a month.

The campaign succeeded by 1) elevating the voices of undocumented immigrants and their loved ones who wanted the change, 2) generating debate about the word in journalistic circles, and 3) pressuring outlets to make the change. The timing of the campaign coincided with political, cultural, and artistic activity led by young undocumented people, many of who identified as "Dreamers" (those who would be eligible for relief under proposed DREAM Act) and other immigrants that simultaneously popularized the word "undocumented" and rejected the media's use of the I-word.

THE PROBLEM

By 2009, Congress had debated five different CIR proposals in as many years; each bill had more enforcement and less improvement than the previous. There have been some advances through Executive Order, like the one that set up Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which provides some relief to undocumented young people. In general, however, the intense implementation of current law has led to the Obama Administration deporting nearly 2 million people to date, the largest number under any single president.

During this time, the use of the i-word exemplified problematic discourse practices: condemning through coded language, silencing history, and emphasizing intent rather than impact. First, the i-word itself is a race code, almost exclusively evoking images of Latinos. Second, people argued that the i-word was racially neutral and legally accurate, which is a distortion of the historical context in which the term has been used. Lastly, users said that because they didn't intend to discriminate by using the word, they could ignore its impact.

The i-word narrowed the immigration policy debate so that law and order became the only legitimate frame 🔲 on immigration policy. In a 2004 memo, Republican communications expert Frank Luntz wrote:

1. Always differentiate **LEGAL** from illegal immigration.
2. Always refer to people crossing the border illegally as "illegal immigrants" — **NOT** as "*illegals*."
3. Always focus on those who are hurt most by illegal immigration— American citizens and immigrants who came here legally and played by the rules.

Immigration restrictionists led the charge to make this the only language used to describe out-of-status immigrants in order to justify excessively punitive deportation and security policies. Roberto Lovato, who worked as a strategist on Drop the i-word, said, "Violence in policy would not have been possible without verbal violence, psychological violence, and actual physical violence. All that dehumanizes the target of the policy so the policy can get traction." The word's ubiquity narrowed the debate on immigration by marginalizing all non-legal dimensions like family, survival, war, or work to make room only for punishment.

Luntz's prohibition on the noun (as in "illegals") assumed grammatical precision among Americans, which fell away immediately as politicians, radio commentators, and everyday people routinely called people "illegals." In an editorial for *The New York Times*, which has ironically refused to drop the i-word, Lawrence Downes wrote in 2007 that, "America has a big problem with illegal immigration, but a big part of it stems from the word 'illegal.' It pollutes the debate. It blocks solutions...Used as an irreducible modifier for a large and largely decent group of people, it is badly damaging. And as a code word for racial and ethnic hatred, it is detestable."

Rising usage of the i-word correlates with rising violence. The Southern Poverty Law Center reported, using FBI data, that hate crimes against Latinos rose by almost 40% between 2003 and 2006, the latest year for which statistics were available when the campaign started.

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For all these reasons, many immigrants themselves, their loved ones and advocates detested the i-word and refused to use it. But that made little difference when the opposite was true virtually everywhere else. This word that was rapidly becoming a dehumanizing slur applied only to brown skinned immigrants became widely accepted by liberals and conservatives alike as the only way to refer to people without papers.

Likewise, the typical narrative arc of stories on immigration used the word, and in doing so, established the law-and-order frame even when it aimed for a sympathetic perspective on the immigrants in question. For example, in 2010 NPR reported a story with the headline, "Illegal Immigrant Deaths Set Record In Arizona," and *New York Times* reporter Julia Preston uses the term 10 times in the article "Births to Illegal Immigrants Are Studied."

The i-word was so common that psychologist Drew Westen advised pro-immigrant advocates to use it early in conversations, especially with white voters. If advocates said something else, like undocumented, listeners thought the speaker was hiding the true nature of immigrant crime.

But there has been a long history of resistance to the word. The Carter Administration made a point of not using it. Professor and activist Elie Wiesel gave the "No Human Being Is Illegal" slogan to the Sanctuary movement in the 1980s and, while it was popularized in the migrant justice world, the quote did not reach much further. By 1994, the National Hispanic Journalists Association had passed a resolution against the noun, which was repeated by the associations of journalists of color. In 2009, the National Alliance of Latino and Caribbean Communities launched the "Somos: We Are" campaign to get outlets to drop the word; their call on the *Boston Globe* was unsuccessful. Whether from the inside or the outside, these efforts were too isolated to successfully change the terms of national debate.

THE INTERVENTION

To succeed, the Drop the I-Word campaign had to do four things. First, it had to build the constituency of people outside of newsrooms, especially immigrants of color, working against the word. Second, it consolidated the inside and outside strategies by unifying them in a web-based hub. Third, the campaign had to generate debate among journalists. And, finally, apply pressure from colleagues and consumers on targeted outlets. These activities were greatly bolstered by artistic and cultural interventions, as well as organizing, by the immigrant-rights movement, which helped to empower the constituency and normalize the word "undocumented."

Together, these activities created a counter to each system averse theme. The campaign itself identified the discriminatory usage of the word (condemning through coded language), challenged its neutrality (silencing history) and established its impact (prioritizing intent over impact).

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The campaign launched in September 2010 at Race Forward's biennial Facing Race conference with a new video and website, the latter constituting the organization of the "hub." Within 24 hours, the site had been shared 20,000 times on Facebook. The website included a pledge; posts and stories from undocumented immigrants; arguments from reporters, linguists, and attorneys; and other resources for action. Religious and student organizations collected pledges through educational activities, including the United Methodist Church's General Commission on Racism and the Unitarian Universalist Church. Over time, the student governments of the University of New Mexico; Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona; UCLA; and UC Berkeley would pass resolutions dropping the i-word.

The site included the "I Am" series, featuring people without papers talking about who they really are, most emphasizing agency and organizing for change. The campaign ensured that the stories represented Latinos, Asians, blacks, whites, Arabs, and Native Americans. Here is one example of a first-person reflection from the series:

> Due to the secret war in Laos during the Vietnam War, my family had to escape across the Mekong River to Thailand. We were in the refugee camps for nearly three years when we were granted documents to come to the U.S. I was eight-and-a-half years old when we arrived in Seattle … I am from Laos, but I am an American because I have lived here for most of my life. Yet, the government doesn't see me as an American… I was considered a permanent resident for most of my life, up until a while ago when I lost my status because I missed an immigration hearing.

Nine-year-old Sam uploaded a video about the i-word he had made for a social studies assignment; comedian Hari Kondabolu modeled better language on YouTube; and SF Giants manager Bruce Bochy called out Fox radio announcer Tony Bruno for using "illegal alien" in a tweet.

Dreamers and other undocumented people who were actively organizing to change policy repeated these stories. The Immigrant Youth Justice League in Chicago first coined the phrase "undocumented and unafraid," which soon appeared on T-shirts, screen prints, and posters nationwide. Tania Unzueta, who co-founded the League, said, "The first thing we did in terms of coming out was to say ["undocumented and unafraid"] at our meetings. And it felt so good to own the term and be able to say it out loud, that we asked ourselves, 'How do we bring this feeling to others?' " In 2009, following a petition started by organizer and law student Prerna Lal on DreamActivist.org, Unzueta and her colleagues protested a USA Today headline calling one of their friends an "illegal student." In addition, many organizers like Unzueta and Lal specifically asked reporters not to label them "illegal."

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Immigrant artists reinforced the Drop the I-Word campaign. Much of the art added humor, beauty, and messages of self-determination. Examples include Dreamers Adrift and Undocumented and Awkward video series; screen prints by Favianna Rodriguez and Julio Salgado; and the poetry, video, and visual art from the Undocubus which carried activists from Arizona to the 2012 Democratic convention in Charlotte, NC. These cultural interventions helped to recharacterize immigrants and popularize "undocumented" as an alternative to "illegal."

The campaign's primary goal was to get the Associated Press to remove "illegal immigrant" from its stylebook. The AP is considered the standard-bearer on journalistic style. Getting the change made there would generate a domino effect on other outlets. Simultaneously, organizations took on local outlets on the way to the AP victory.

The second strategy was to generate debate about the i-word in journalistic circles. Outlets were asked to take the pledge on droptheiword.com, and about 30 independent news providers did so right away, as did individuals like sports writer Dave Zirin and author Junot Diaz.

Debates followed from the Poynter Institute, the Neiman Fellowship, the Society of Professional Journalists and UNITY, the alliance of associations for journalists of color. When *The New York Times* Crossword editor Will Shortz used "illegal" as the answer to a hint about border crossers, the campaign challenged him, noting that the crossword has a policy of not using slurs as hints or answers. Shortz apologized, noting that the word was so common he didn't even think about it. Campaign coordinator Monica Novoa later debated *The New York Times* reporter Nina Bernstein on the issue. I-word activists dominated the AP's 2011 Twitter feed with tweets about what should be in their next stylebook.

In September 2011, journalist Jose Antonio Vargas (JAV) gave the keynote speech to 1,000 reporters, editors and bloggers at the Online News Association, imploring them to drop the i-word. In his *New York Times* magazine essay coming out as undocumented in 2010, and in a follow up story for *Time Magazine* in 2012, Vargas had argued with editors about the label. Being both a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and an undocumented immigrant, Vargas represented the inside-outside strategy in one body.

> I grew up in newsrooms. I know, first-hand, the power and influence of journalists and news organizations in framing how issues and people are viewed. One of my primary goals when "outing" myself as an undocumented journalist was to change —and, frankly, to disrupt — how my colleagues viewed the immigration issue and the people who are directly and indirectly impacted by it. I was very much devoted in getting this done because it's personal. Language is personal. How I am viewed as a human being, not as an "illegal" — that's personal. *(Interview with JAV)*

Cultural interventions helped to recharacterize immigrants and popularize "undocumented" as an alternative to "illegal."

Later in the campaign, key partners conducted critical research about the effects of the word. In Spring 2012, the National Hispanic Media Coalition commissioned a national poll, finding that in discussing those in this country without permission, the term "illegal alien" evoked much more negative feelings among readers than the term "undocumented immigrants," and that one-third of Americans thought that all Latinos were, in fact, "illegal immigrants." Fox News Latino released a poll showing that most Latinos found the i-word offensive.

In March 2012, the campaign met with the Managing and Style Guide Editors of the AP, accompanied by Chandra Bhatnagar, a human rights attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union. Bhatnagar laid out the legal ramifications of using imprecise language like the i-word, which covers up dozens of potential status situations, and of making a judgment when the subject had not actually been adjudicated in court. The editors were not yet ready to change the stylebook, but were open to noting that the word was not universally accepted as accurate and neutral. The AP also met with campaign partners Vargas and Alex Nogales from the National Hispanic Media Coalition.

In October 2012, the editors released a stylebook update urging sensitivity around this difficult topic, noting that sometimes people have a migratory status that is in limbo, or in "legal dispute," and that even once a court makes a determination about deportation, there has never been a ruling that finds a person to be "illegal." But this statement stopped short of recommending the use of "undocumented" or "unauthorized."

The 2012 election cycle generated more momentum, in part by raising Republican voices in favor of changing language. Republican losses in 2012 were often chalked up to an alienated Latino vote, and conservative handwringing ensued. The National Hispanic Conference urged Republicans to drop vitriolic terms such as "illegal immigrant" and "anchor babies." In early 2013, Sen. Rand Paul said that he thought the i-word was offensive and would not use it. ABC News released a video criticizing *The New York Times* for not making the move they had made long ago. Seventy thousand people signed a Moveon.org petition by Cesar Chavez's widow Helen protesting *The New York Times*' usage. A similar petition by Presente.org generated some 20,000 signatures.

One local example of campaign work is United 4 the Dream (U4TD), a young peoples' organization hosted by the Latin American Coalition in Charlotte. After a briefing and strategy session with the national Drop the I-Word team, U4TD launched a local campaign in May 2011 because undocumented high school students identified the i-word as a cudgel used to bully and intimidate them. Within two months, the chair of the Mecklenburg County Commission, signed the pledge, as did Mike Collins, host of "Charlotte Talks" at the local NPR station. U4TD met with local daily newspaper *The Charlotte Observer* and conducted a full week of protests in front of the Observer's offices, but paper cited the AP style guide as evidence that the term was neutral.

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Yet, when the paper published a story about the first local baby born in 2012, who happened to be Latino, hateful comments poured in, replete with references to "anchor baby" and "illegal." The Observer then published a letter from Jess George, Executive Director of The Latin American Coalition, asking them to drop the racially charged term. That letter sparked more hateful comments, and the debate prompted *Creative Loafing Charlotte*, the leading alternative weekly publication, to drop the term. While most of these outlets made their changes privately, U4TD still saw the needle move over time. "Some of the local TV stations covered the issue and we gained a lot of awareness for it," said Selene Medina, communications chair. "A couple of stations did not outright drop the term, but we noticed WSOC-TV Channel 9 started using undocumented more and more. So did Fox local."

THE OUTCOME

On April 2, 2013, the Associated Press published a blog post entitled "Illegal No More." The editors would no longer sanction using "illegal immigrant" in the stylebook, although it would refer to illegal immigration. In part, the decision was driven by a trend in the organization away from labels to descriptions of a subject's situation, i.e. a person with schizophrenia rather than a schizophrenic. Within weeks, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today*, *The Denver Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* had followed. On any given day, half the world's people read an AP story, and the readership of these additional early adopters numbers more than 6 million.

FIGURE 1: ASSOCIATED PRESS I-WORD USAGE: 1995-2013
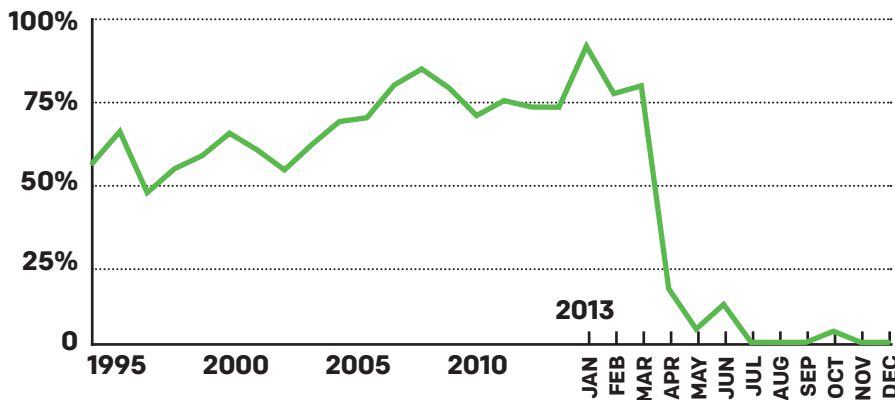
The large numbers reflect the more critical impact on the immigration debate. Although Congress hasn't taken up immigration reform as many hoped it would in 2013, the discourse on immigration has changed substantially.

No one has felt this shift more than immigrants themselves, especially undocumented immigrants. The debate over the i-word gave the young leaders of U4TD a way to broaden the immigration policy discourse. "These words were preventing us from having a fair conversation about immigration reform," Medina said. "Once the big newspapers started dropping the term, the local outlets started following. It was also so much easier to have the policy conversations." The impact of the win is more nuanced, more contextual, more personal coverage of the immigration reform issue and the people directly and indirectly impacted by it. Changing the language and insisting to be seen as a human being opens up the conversation and raises the empathy quotient, said Vargas.

In the days following the AP decision, Race Forward executive director Rinku Sen attended a conference of community college students in eastern Washington. One young man told her, "a lot of my family is undocumented, and it's been really hard. This helps." Later that Spring, Sen met a young Chinese American soldier who had been serving in Afghanistan while her mother was in deportation proceedings in New York City. "It was really awful seeing that word all the time I was deployed, with my mom in such a scary situation," she said.

Immigration advocates and artists found that the decision bolstered their refusal to use the i-word. LeeAnn Hall, director of the Alliance for a Just Society, who has organized for immigration reform in predominantly white states like Montana and Idaho, was in a communications strategy meeting debating the i-word on April 2. "Then I got a text saying the AP had dropped it, and I said, OK, debate's over," she said. The composer Byron Au Yong had been using dropthei-word.com to educate the entire marketing department of American Conservatory Theater. The theater was presenting his play about a Chinese immigrant who died in a stalled elevator in New York City with materials calling it "a hip hop opera about an illegal immigrant." Yong previewed his work two days after the AP decision with no i-words.

There is more to do. *The New York Times* has hedged the decision, not dropping the i-word completely, but adding alternatives to their style guide. *The Washington Post* refuses to drop the word or to meet with the campaign. Hugo Balta, president of the National Hispanic Journalists Association, sees such resistance as stemming from arrogance. "To still say, using *The New York Times* as an example, 'everybody's wrong and we're right,' that tells me a lot about what type of news they're producing, more for themselves than for the public. And eventually, it will be a slow process, but they'll have to come around too."

MIGRATION IS BEAUTIFUL INITIATIVE

The Migration is Beautiful initiative exemplifies the essential and complementary role art and culture can play in envisioning and popularizing racially just frames that compel new political and social practice. Designed to supplant the same law-and-order frame discussed in the Drop the I-Word intervention, Migration is Beautiful (MiB) offers a perspective centered upon the beauty of humanity. Supported by a network of artists and cultural organizers who believe in humanizing the migrant experience, MiB embraces the monarch butterfly as a visual symbol of migrants and their human right to move.

The initiative leverages both the artistic form, and the popularity of artists themselves, to make a range of products go viral across social and traditional media platforms. Digital prints, street art, clothing, and interactive performances reach new audiences and attract a young, vibrant constituency. The MiB Artist's Statement on Immigration Reform, released in spring 2013, directly targeted decision-makers in Washington. This action coupled explicit policy demands with creative imagery. The message: Militarized borders and racially discriminatory immigration law is incompatible with a country that values family, dignity, and equity.

THE PROBLEM

In the summer of 2013, immigration policy in the Senate, and later in the House, demonstrated just how dangerous and illogical our nation's unquestioned devotion to law and borders could be for the social, political, and economic health of the people who live within its confines. Debates rooted in the ideology of the nation-state and its sister narrative, "protect our borders at any cost, human or otherwise," became a front-line tool to distract forward momentum for humane immigration reform.

In June 2013, an amendment increasing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border became a bipartisan bargaining chip to rally support from Senate Republicans to pass the immigration reform bill on to the House. Decisions included doubling the number of border patrol agents, purchasing top-of-the-line security technology such as drones and military helicopters, and constructing an additional 700 miles of new walls, all at the price of $30 billion dollars.[1]

Mainstream media coverage of the debates parroted the policymakers' destructive assertions, namely that a politicized and militarized border is legitimate, natural, and necessary to maintain U.S. liberty and security. Defense of the border stood as a non-negotiable precursor to any deliberation around alternative measures for immigration reform. The most obvious harm in this debate is, of course, the hundreds of migrants who continue to die year after year as the wall expands to funnel individuals through the most deadly parts of the U.S.-Mexico desert. The second danger emerging from this debate is that political rhetoric, clutching to the ideal of continuous border construction and reinforcement, negates dialogue that is either sensical or humane.

migration is beautiful

The incessant drive by the political Right — and Left — to construct, maintain, and defend the U.S.-Mexico border in the wake of massive social movements for immigration reform reflects a level of violent disregard, not only for the lives of immigrants, but also for the statistical evidence that proves we, in fact, have no need for further militarization. According to a report by the Washington Office on Latin America, the United States has added five times more border patrol staff in the last twenty years, and, yet, agents are apprehending the fewest number of migrants since the 1970's, a reflection of the sharp drop in migrants attempting to cross the border.[2] Still, policy-makers continue to call for increasingly deadly borders: In 2011, Herman Cain ran for president on a platform that promoted an electrified fence and military troops "with real guns and real bullets" in order to prevent people from migrating.[3]

As political culture consumes itself with a narrow focus on protecting the nation-state — completely obscuring broader discussions around the human right to move — xenophobia hardens in the hearts of US citizens. According to a CNN poll in June of 2013, 62% of American adults sampled said that "increasing border security to reduce or eliminate the number of immigrants coming into this country without permission" should be the main focus of the U.S. government in dealing with immigration policy.[4]

The backdrop for this discourse is, of course, the historic and current existence of the border itself. As a metaphoric and physical symbol of U.S. law for immigration restrictionists, the border wall serves as an effective mental barrier in the national psyche, whereby the very act of crossing it is supposed to signal a direct affront to our sovereignty, security, and liberty. This nationalist narrative establishes a dominant lens of criminality, a perspective that relegates immigrants to the status of criminal object and dictates the way we design all immigration law.

Under the law-and-order frame, racist laws and institutions remain invisible and unquestioned, providing an entry point for implicit bias to paint a story of individualized migrants who "choose to break immigration law." Migration becomes a consequence of pure individual choice, eclipsing our understanding of the larger systemic conditions that drive people to leave their country of birth. The logical message that arises is that immigrants deserve to be labeled as criminals accompanied by corresponding legal punishment(s). The implicit bias surrounding criminality promoted in the space of race silence can lead to explicit racial coding. Shrouded terms like "illegal immigrant" degrade into slurs such as the stand-alone "illegal," becoming explicitly racist and derogatory language influencing both the minds and the practices of the public and decision makers. Echoed and exacerbated by the media, the demand for "complete" border security continues to be a point of further reification behind the powerful and effective image of the border wall and the criminal objectification of migrating people within the national consciousness.

> The backdrop for this discourse is, of course, the historic and current existence of the border itself.

In the face of staunch resistance to a vision of humane and just social and political immigration policy, the Migration is Beautiful initiative, cofounded by immigrant rights artist and activist Favianna Rodriguez, strives to create a framework through art and culture that beckons its audience to step outside of the law altogether. The cultural project invites the public to consider a society without borders and begs us to question the absurdity of a law that would criminalize human migration in the first place.

THE INTERVENTION

Favianna Rodriguez, cofounder of the pro-migrant artists network Culture-Strike, is the visual artist behind the Migration is Beautiful project. She believes art and culture is uniquely positioned to provide visionary frameworks that free movement organizers and legislators from thinking solely in narrow policy negotiations. "In order to achieve a particular policy, organizers must use the language of the dominant frame when conversing with those who write laws," explains Rodriguez. "As an artist I can go into a fantastical world of characters and use them as metaphors to create a narrative of human emotions in order to challenge the status quo."

Rodriguez describes the pragmatic challenges that come with operating within the political arena: In response to conservative groups calling for more militarization of the border, Immigrant rights groups often respond with demands for no militarization of the border. As an artist, Rodriguez is interested in challenging the entire frame that narrative falls within. "As an artist, its not interesting to play within that frame, but rather to imagine what would it look like to live free of borders. Borders are obsolete, borders mean boxes and barriers to me. I'm an artist and I want to be free flowing and create culture that reflects a belief in the open exchange of ideas, culture, and information that can surpass borders."

Rodriguez hopes MiB can advance the conversation beyond "more or less militarized borders" and into the perhaps unimaginable world of "open borders." As an artist, Rodriguez aims to challenge the dominant law-and-order frame without directly engaging in the typical narrative by replacing the legal-versus-illegal binary with a greater focus on human beauty and human nature.

MiB acts to reclaim the migrant community's identity of beauty and human dignity in the face of racially biased discourse and policy by using the butterfly to entice the public mind to replace the criminal image with one that evokes sentiments of respect and connection. The butterfly has acted as a symbol for the immigrants rights movement for years, yet timing, a supportive network, and long-term visioning empowered Rodriguez to leverage the butterfly into a potent multi-faceted interactive initiative. "When I first thought about centering around the butterfly I wasn't so sure. But when I witnessed people's reaction to it, I realized that we were lacking an image of beauty in politics overall. I wanted to approach it through the lens of the social imagination. How can people see and feel stories? The possibilities: people creating and wearing a butterfly, a performance, a costume, a moment to play and be free."

"Borders are obsolete, borders mean boxes and barriers to me. I'm an artist and I want to be free flowing and create culture that reflects a belief in the open exchange of ideas, culture, and information that can surpass borders."

The Migration is Beautiful butterfly image stands as an explanatory device for audiences who are grappling to understand the human impact of immigration policy reform. When the general public can access an image that reasserts the humanity of immigrants, in contrast to coded language such as "illegal," it invites deeper inquiry into the dehumanizing nature of immigration policy that includes police brutality, imprisonment, and deportation.

Alongside the butterfly imagery, the initiative's tagline, "Migration is Beautiful, Migration is Natural," serves as a metaphor to incite the immigrant rights movement as well as foster public empathy and respect for those who migrate. This simple, yet potent message targets the entire system surrounding U.S. immigration including industries in border security, electoral politics, and media dependent on the criminalization of immigrants.

In Rodriguez's butterfly image she brings race directly back into the conversation with artistic techniques that illicit audience empathy. Within the vibrantly colored wings of the MiB butterfly, she embeds the faces of people of color, inviting audiences to connect the racial and ethnic backgrounds of immigrant communities to positive images and metaphors. In her study of comic book theory, Rodriguez learned the importance of faces. When an image has eyes, ears, and a mouth, people immediately see themselves and it causes a humanizing effect. In describing why she crafted this image, Rodriguez writes, "I believe that we shouldn't allow our identity to be defined only by our suffering, nor by the actions that others have taken to devalue our families and our labor— rather, let us celebrate our beauty, pride, and resilience in the face of inequality and injustice."

The second narrative within the Migration is Beautiful initiative reminds us of the natural history of human migration, a direct challenge to the practice of silencing history. The tagline "Migration is Natural" engages with an understanding that masses of butterflies migrate annually between Mexico and the U.S. [and around the world], a metaphor that undercuts the competing narrative of the border wall and that migrating bodies equate to criminality. This cultural work is meant to illuminate a very basic fact – that migration has been part of our human condition from the beginning of time. "The simplicity of it allows us to start from a point of positivity – that people move in order to fulfill their dream of their best self, and this is a part of the human spirit," says Rodriguez. Her new approach to an age-old narrative has clearly resonated with both those inside the immigrant rights movement and within the greater public from street protests, to online campaigns, to popular cultural products.

When the general public can access an image that reasserts the humanity of immigrants, in contrast to coded language such as "illegal," it invites deeper inquiry into the dehumanizing nature of immigration policy that includes police brutality, imprisonment, and deportation.

THE OUTCOME

In this last year the MiB narrative and its accompanying image has become a go-to tool for immigrant rights activists on the ground. Rodriguez and her CultureStrike cohort traveled to the May 1, 2013, immigrant rights march in Los Angeles; the National Peoples Action in Washington, D.C.; and the Children's Immigration March in Santa Ana, California, to assist activists in constructing their own butterflies in the name of re-humanizing the discourse on immigrant rights. Throughout 2013, CultureStrike led over two dozen art-based workshops incorporating the butterfly. The image was also included in a mobilization DIY art instruction tool kit distributed to over 180 cities planning actions for the October 5th National Day of Dignity and Respect.

The team's production of cultural events with local immigrant rights artists and organizers at critical front-line locations such as Los Angeles, and Tucson, Arizona, and the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, used the theme to spark dialogue about parallel narratives between butterfly migration and human communities migrating from South and Central America. The tour was captured in an online street art documentary, produced by the internationally recognized musician Pharrell Williams and disseminated through his "I Am Other" YouTube channel.[5] The video received more than 45,000 views from a predominantly young, racially diverse, hip-hop audienceds, potentially attracting a new constituency base into the pro-migrant movement.

Leveraging the power of technology, MigrationisBeautiful.com offers an interactive platform where supporters can share images across social media, purchase T-shirts, Migration is Beautiful action kits, coloring books for kids, and templates to design your own wings. As an artist and culture maker, Rodriguez is especially attuned to the power of products and participatory actions as a way to pass ideas on.

In May 2013, Rodriguez, in partnership with organizations The Culture Group, CultureStrike, and Air Traffic Control, released an artists' statement on immigration reform. The statement brought together over 100 high profile actors, directors, writers, musicians, visual artists, and other creatives from the cultural community to help disseminate the butterfly icon and call upon President Barack Obama and members of Congress to pass humane immigration reform.

In response to the statement, MigrationIsBeautiful.com received nearly 15,000 visitors and 900 additional sign-ons within the first 10 days of the launch. MiB generated approximately 11 million social media impressions on Facebook and Twitter. Together, artists used their networks to spread the MiB image, frame, narrative, and message to an audience in the millions that generated three outcomes: strengthening the constituency, expanding the base of support, and influencing national discourse.

MIGRATIONISBEAUTIFUL.COM

offers an interactive platform where supporters can share images across social media, purchase T-shirts, Migration is Beautiful action kits, coloring books for kids, and templates to design your own wings.

The tragic death of 17-year old Trayvon Martin, and the subsequent deference afforded his killer by the laws and local police department in Sanford, Fla., demonstrated the deadly repercussions of the dominant criminality frame for all who cared to see them.

Like most teenagers returning home on foot from a convenience store, Martin was not armed with anything considered dangerous. He had only with him a bag of Skittles candy, iced tea and a cell phone that evening in late February 2012. But it was the darkness of his skin — and of his hooded sweatshirt — that instantly ensnared him in the criminality frame that identifies people of color generally, but young Black or Brown men particularly, as violent or otherwise dangerous menaces to society. George Zimmerman, the self-styled neighborhood watchman who pursued, shot and killed Martin, viewed the teen as a threat. And Zimmerman's demeanor and use of deadly force was legally justified that evening by a little-known policy commonly referred to as "Stand Your Ground." And the Stand Your Ground policy had no more effective proponent than the, perhaps, even lesser known American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which was responsible behind the scenes for the policy's proliferation.

In March of 2012, a few weeks after Martin's death, the internet and social-media savvy racial justice organization Color of Change expanded their campaign against ALEC, which had begun a year earlier in opposition to the conservative organization's voter suppression efforts. "The moment-to-movement piece was incredibly important," says Color of Change Executive Director Rashad Robinson about the grassroots outrage at Martin's killing and the absence of action from the local police. "People wanted something to do in response to what was happening. We gave people something clear to do."[6] In other words, Color of Change led its members and allies to racially just solutions and actions in response to this horrible episode and ongoing miscarriage of justice.

Through a variety of tactics, Color of Change members pressured corporate members of ALEC to divest from the organization. That divestment would reduce funding for ALEC as well as highlight its involvement in policies that disproportionately impact people and communities of color. Color of Change strategists believed that a loss of financial backing to ALEC would, in turn, decrease the people and fiscal power that allows ALEC to support the aforementioned and other abhorrent, systemically racist policies and practices. In April 2012, the strategists' belief was proven accurate by ALEC's decision to shut down its Public Safety and Elections Task Force because of criticism from legislative and corporate members on ALEC's backing of voter identification and Stand Your Ground laws.[7]

Color of Change led its members and allies to racially just solutions and actions in response to this horrible episode and ongoing miscarriage of justice.

Color of Change shifted the dialogue from a discussion of individual racism to a discussion of systemic racism by introducing ALEC to broad audiences and emphasizing its role in prioritizing policies and promoting principles that have a disparate impact on people and communities of color. In accessible language, Color of Change demonstrated the harms that a Stand Your Ground law had on the life and death of Trayvon Martin. Utilizing a racially just frame that humanized people and communities of color, Color of Change built common ground around these harmful experiences and other impacts on people and communities of color, leveraged people power they had built to take action towards racial justice. The ALEC campaign supplemented the longer-term work of groups like the Dream Defenders to reverse Stand Your Ground in Florida, generating much needed early victories against the criminalization of African Americans.

By adding ALEC to the narrative of the Trayvon Martin/George Zimmerman confrontation, Color of Change was able to shift considerable public focus to the negative impact of the policy on people of color, rather than the intent of the policy to provide a shield for frightened white people. Color of Change successfully challenged the mainstream media's use of the discourse practice *prioritizing (policy) intent over impact* (See Part One, "Prioritizing (Policy) Intent Over Impact"). They candidly publicized ALEC's influence on legislation, such as voter ID laws and Stand Your Ground laws. These policies purportedly intended to prevent voter fraud as well as empower individuals with the right to use deadly force for self-defense while minimizing and in some cases erasing the significant harmful impacts on people and communities of color.

THE PROBLEM

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) was established in 1973 with the objective to "Support state legislators to be more effective in their role of advancing public policy initiatives consistent [with] ALEC's principles."[9] These principles include free-market enterprise, limited government and federalism at the state level.[10] Corporations fund their work, support the prioritization of policies as well as help to draft legislation. In turn, state legislators would introduce and advance said legislation.

In 2011, ALEC supported voter ID laws that civil rights groups argued would restrict Black voters' access to the ballot box.[11] Among the provisions incorporated in voter ID laws are measures to shorten the length of time for early voting, limit pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds, eliminate both same-day voter registration and Sunday voting, prohibit university students from using school identification cards for proof of residency, and an increase in the number of poll watchers who can challenge a voter's eligibility.[12]

In 2012, ALEC supported Stand Your Ground laws. "The bill was brought to ALEC by the National Rifle Association (NRA), and fits into a pattern of ALEC bills that disproportionately impact communities of color."[13] Stand Your Ground laws, also known as the Castle Doctrine; allow homeowners the right to self-defense beyond their actual homes. As Center for Media Democracy Fellow Brendan M. Fischer put it, "If the ALEC ["Stand Your Ground" law] opens the door for racial bias to be protected under the criminal justice system, the ALEC model "Voter ID Act" may sanction racial prejudice in the electoral system."[14]

COLOR OF CHANGE is an organization devoted to strengthening Black America's political voice through online organizing. Founded in September 2005, its goals are to empower its members, make government more responsive to the concerns of Black Americans and to bring about positive political and social change for everyone.[8] Color of Change's campaign sought to end the membership of state legislators and major corporations from ALEC, which continues to have a significant impact on dominant frames in the realm of criminal justice. The campaign supplants the dominant frame of the inherent criminality of people of color by redirecting the focus to a real villain, which resulted in divestments from this powerful lobby of corporations, which promoted voter identification laws and Stand Your Ground laws.

In reality, these acts of legislation have a disproportionate impact on people and communities of color that relies upon building barriers to access to the political process, silencing the voices of people and communities of color, and physical and emotional harm by deadly force. All of the above impacts of these two pieces of legislation allow systemic racism to thrive.

Research from Texas A&M University entitled *Does Strengthening Self-Defense Law Deter Crime or Escalate Violence*, "suggests that laws may lead to more deaths and that the rates of murder and non-negligent manslaughter increased by 8 percent in states with Stand Your Ground laws. That's an additional 600 homicides per year in the states that have enacted such laws."[15] However, what is the link between Stand Your Ground laws and racial bias? As per the request of FRONT-LINE, researchers "analyzed the pool of 43,500 homicides by race in states with Stand Your Ground laws and those without them."[16] Researchers found that "In non-Stand Your Ground states, whites are 250 percent more likely to be found justified in killing a Black person than a white person who kills another white person; in Stand Your Ground states, that number jumps to 354 percent."[17]

Similarly, this message plays upon unspoken white fears included in the frame and narrative, which function to enable the mass incarceration and criminalization of people of color. Color of Change laments, "It's not [considered] racism, until someone calls someone the 'n' word. Racism has been reduced to name-calling and hood wearing [Ku Klux Klan]".[18] The media portrays racism as individual actions, which demand individual responses. This message, backed by institutional policy or legislation such as Stand Your Ground laws is incredibly powerful in that it allows for individuals to police one another and, in the case of George Zimmerman, to shoot first. This message discounts the reality and impacts of individual and systemic racism on the lives of people and communities of color and does nothing to offer racially just solutions or further any real change at the systemic level.

THE INTERVENTION

In 2011, in partnership with other national and local allied organizations, Color of Change began investigating ALEC and its 100 corporate members. Color of Change chose the 15 corporate members with the most recognizable brands to target for their campaign against the corporate financing of voter suppression. Understanding the corporations sensitivity about their brands, and ALEC's extreme secretiveness, Color of Change approached these corporations privately with the assertion that these corporations may not have understood what they were involved with. Meanwhile Color of Change's members gathered over 500,000 signatures and placed thousands of calls in order to continue to build their base. In the list of 15 corporations, PepsiCo was the first to divest. Color of Change thanked Pepsi but didn't publicize the shift so that they could leverage that victory in ongoing, still private discussions with Pepsi's competitors.

In response to ALEC's attack on Voting Rights, Color of Change developed its campaign that utilized the following four factors of their success: 1) Deep Research – Leveraging and using information to back up a story; 2) Strategic Insight – Utilizing theory of change and being able to walk members through the political process; 3) Compelling Media Strategy – Staying on message and holding others accountable for their actions; and 4) Real, Organized Constituency – Telling a story that is counter to the mainstream story and builds relationships.

"In non-Stand Your Ground states, whites are 250 percent more likely to be found justified in killing a Black person than a white person who kills another white person; in Stand Your Ground states, that number jumps to 354 percent."

In 2012, after the tragedy of Trayvon Martin's killing, through the work of the Center for Media and Democracy and Media Matters, Color of Change learned that ALEC not only supported Stand Your Ground laws, but also was a major proponent of them. These laws became increasingly notorious the week following Martin's murder, when Zimmerman had yet to be arrested. Leveraging public attention, Color of Change strategically exposed the hypocrisy of the corporate members of ALEC, whose financial support of legislative bodies that advance laws like 'Stand Your Ground' belied just how much harm they were willing to cause the people of color within their consumer base.

Corporations spend a great deal of resources on building recognizable and valuable brands that consumers attach to. Color of Change understood that exposing these hypocrisies would force companies to decide whether involvement with ALEC was worth jeopardizing their consumer base. PepsiCo's divestment allowed Color of Change to approach corporations such as Coca-Cola and leverage the fact that one of their biggest competitors had just divested. With the public escalation of Stand Your Ground, Color of Change incorporated the tragedy of Trayvon into their messaging, as well as the privatization of prisons, mandatory minimum sentencing, anti immigration legislation in Arizona, all while maintaining their central focus on voting rights. Shortly thereafter, Coca-Cola divested.

Color of Change told the story of hypocrisy and race, which animated enough of their base, as well as placed corporations in a place to make a decision about what, is most important for their business. Color of Change highlighted the hypocrisy of ALEC's legislative members in advancing laws that limit access to voting rights, while simultaneously benefitting from the vote of people and communities of color that elected them into office. Color of Change also highlighted the hypocrisy of ALEC's corporate members to profit financially from people and communities of color at the same time they support legislation that increases the likelihood of placing people and communities of color in danger.

Color of Change argued that you could not come for Black votes by day and take away their vote by night; nor could ALEC come for Black business by day and set them up for potential harm by night. Color of Change fights racial injustice and the danger it presents to the basic safety of people and communities of color.[19] Part of the successes of Color of Change's campaign against ALEC arose from the use of both an inside and outside political strategy. Color of Change's inside strategy emphasized their members' outrage and provided the corporations with the opportunity to divest from ALEC without being directly attacked as racist or for advancing systemically racist legislation. But because members had been expressing their outrage through generalized petitions focused on corporations, Color of Change was able to play out the potential campaign in those private conversations, giving each corporation a chance to see and weigh the consequences of potential escalation.

Color of Change argued that you could not come for Black votes by day and take away their vote by night; nor could ALEC come for Black business by day and set them up for potential harm by night.

For Color of Change, a frame is the boundary within which narratives and the messages fit inside. According to Robinson, "If you do not deal with the frame, messages and facts do not help because they sit inside the reality that people are living inside of." With regard to Trayvon Martin, the inherent criminality of people of color — or the idea that Black is dangerous — is the dominant frame that was challenged. The dominant frame supports the idea of the heroic law enforcement figure versus the scary criminal Black or Brown man. Color of Change staff sent an email to its members honoring Trayvon Martin, stating, "In a culture that inundates us with images of Black men as criminal, we are continually reminded that something as simple as walking home from the corner store can draw unwanted attention that puts our very lives in danger. Black Americans face racial animosity every day, and far too often that animosity turns violent."[20]

In 2013, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity published a report on implicit bias. According to the Kirwan Institute, "Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner."[21] The Kirwan Institute identifies shooter bias as an additional bias that yields a potential vulnerability for legislation such as Stand Your Ground. "Shooter bias refers to the strong and pervasive implicit association that exists between Blackness (as opposed to [whiteness])."[22] Given an understanding of shooter bias within the context of implicit bias, it is easy to see the lethality of a policy, which grants individuals the right to self-defense with a complete disregard for implicit bias, explicit bias, and systemic racism.

Color of Change defines a narrative as one that has a protagonist, an antagonist and a actions that everyday people can take to support the protagonist. On an individual and interpersonal level, two stories were told around Trayvon Martin. The first story cast George Zimmerman in the role of the protagonist, victim, and hero, while Trayvon Martin was cast in the role of the villain. In another story Martin's parents were cast in the role of the protagonists, while Zimmerman was cast in the role of the villain. In the ALEC campaign, on an institutional and structural level, Color of Change members and supporters cast themselves as protagonists, while ALEC was cast in the role of the villain.

Lastly, Color of Change defines a message as one that serves three aims: 1) Illustrating concrete harm while not using grandiose language; 2) Building common ground; and 3) Avoiding opponents' terminology and frames. Inside the dominant frame of the inherent criminality of people of color the message was that it was only right for Zimmerman to watch and follow Martin. As Color of Change noted: "On the Christian Broadcasting Network on Tuesday, Pat Robertson suggested that George Zimmerman was right to follow Trayvon Martin, despite being told by 911 operators not to do so, because criminals wear hoodies."[23] This message, reinforced by media moguls such as Pat Robertson, served to support the narrative that Black and Brown people make bad decisions. These decisions are individual choices apart from any broad system and served to legitimize the tragic and avoidable death of a 17-year-old teen.

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

THE OUTCOME

Color of Change's campaign achieved many victories. Along with several advocacy organizations, Color of Change shed a tremendous amount of light on the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). "The council, known as ALEC, has since become better known, with news organizations alerting the public to the damage it has caused: voter ID laws that marginalize minorities."[24] ALEC is now notorious and no longer as successful at keeping its strategies and tactics undisclosed. Color of Change expanded, educated and mobilized a constituency of people, beyond the lobbying class, who were outraged and prepared to respond to ALEC's actions and impacts. Moreover, Color of Change members felt empowered, saw themselves as change agents, and felt capable of holding ALEC publicly accountable for harms committed against people and communities of color. Their collective efforts against ALEC helped lead many corporations to divest from the council.

FIGURE 2:

NUMBER OF ARTICLES IN TOP 10 U.S. NEWSPAPERS ON AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL FROM 2009-2013[25]*
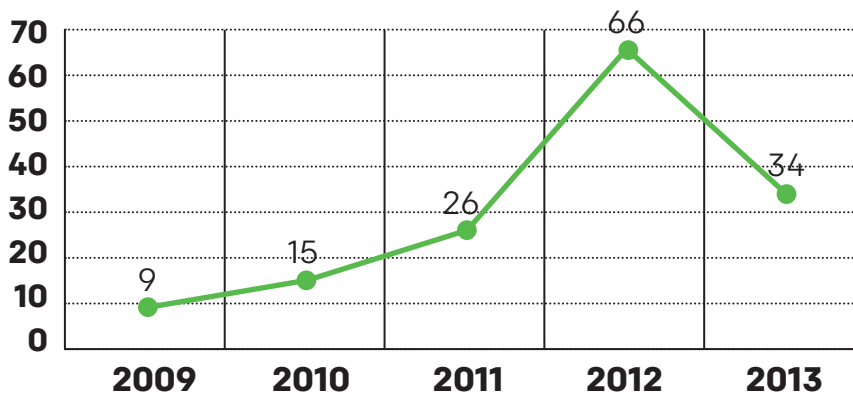
A handful of corporations including PepsiCo divested in early 2012, prior to Trayvon Martin's death, and the pace of divestments quickened thereafter. Corporations such as Coca-Cola, Kraft Foods, McDonald's, Wendy's, Mars Inc., and Blue Cross Blue Shield Association divested thanks to the pressure that Color of Change's members brought to bear after Martin's death, as well as the ongoing private conversations initiated by Color of Change.

They ran the campaign with a domino-effect, announcing corporations that were divesting from ALEC one at a time in order to create a momentum. This tactic is particularly important for online organizing and racial justice movements. Color of Change's campaign directed their members' attention to ALEC and then won a series of victories in corporate and legislative divestment from ALEC for them to witness through mainstream news outlets. On December 3, 2013, "The Guardian newspaper published a trove of internal ALEC documents showing how grim its situation has become. It reported that the group has lost almost 400 state legislators in the past two years and more than 60 corporations. Its income fell a third short of projections in the first six months of this year."[26] These numbers equal a loss of members by 20% and a loss of corporations by 30%.[27]

ALEC is now notorious and no longer as successful at keeping its strategies and tactics undisclosed.

[In a statement, the organization said,] "We at Color of Change have been arguing for a long time that ALEC's agenda directly threatens people of color and deeply corrodes democracy. Restricting minority voting rights through voter-ID laws hurts us all, as do 'Stand your ground' shooting laws that disproportionately favor white shooters who kill black people."[28] In addition ALEC suffered a decline in membership, membership fees and donations have fallen short, and has had to consider alternate sources to recruit members and generate revenue.[29]

On December 10, 2013, in an email to members, Robinson said,

> "This is big news and a true example of how the power of our members' voices coupled with our strategic insight and media savvy, can lead to tremendous victories and lasting change. For well over a year, ALEC claimed our corporate campaign wasn't hurting them; that pushing laws, which make it harder to vote or make our communities unsafe, didn't damage their budget. They even claimed that we overstated our impact. The facts are clear and we now know that this was a much bigger win for civil rights and the fight for corporate accountability than we ever imagined possible."

For Color of Change, as with many racial justice organizations, incremental victories are vital. When people see and feel that change is possible, it becomes more likely that more people will want to get involved. Racial justice interventions that seem insurmountable and do not have clear, timed, and measurable wins are destined to fail. By focusing on the impact of policies and practices on people and communities of color, Color of Change was able to shift the racial discourse to one that highlights and connects systemic racism and one that provides racial justice solutions.

"The facts are clear and we now know that this was a much bigger win for civil rights and the fight for corporate accountability than we ever imagined possible."

Oscar Grant was an unarmed young Black man who was shot and killed while lying face down on the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station platform in the early morning hours of New Year's Day 2009 by a white BART officer. The film, directed by Ryan Coogler, begins with actual footage of the altercation between Oscar Grant and BART police recorded by witnesses on the train when Grant was shot and killed. The act of documenting through cell phone footage was a powerful example of self-agency and the importance of community-based storytelling. In *Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice, Cutting and Themba-Nixon state*, "There are few images of Black and brown youth as *children*—human and deserving of love and care."[30] This film intervenes with simple brilliance. Coogler does not spend time on character development of the villain, who in this case could be either the individual BART officer who killed Grant or the institutional nature of racialized law enforcement itself. Instead, Coogler focuses on Grant, the protagonist. This choice, alone, is a radical racial justice intervention. The lives and experiences of people of color, who are impacted by racist policies and practices, are made to be up front, center, and legitimate.

THE PROBLEM

Fruitvale Station is a film that captures the day leading up to the fatal event. By applying the frame of inherent criminality to his story, the mainstream media denied Grant a sense of humanity. This same frame was used to provide context and meaning to the public understanding of the story of Trayvon Martin. While coverage of the Oscar Grant story was readily available for journalistic access, the focus of the mainstream media coverage was on the rioting by Oakland residents that occurred days after the shooting and the debate over whether Grant was involved in the fight that broke out on the train that prompted BART officers to the scene in the first place. The film is iconoclastic in that it portrays Grant as a complex human being and invites the audience to bear witness to his life. The film premiered days before the George Zimmerman verdict and, in so doing, could not have been timed more aptly as an intervention to the dominant frame of the inherent criminalization of people of color in the realm of criminal justice. Coogler states, "It was really ironic that the verdict came down the weekend our film got released. Obviously, we were working on the film before Trayvon … was killed. And that tragedy, when it happened, deeply affected me back in February. And it affected a lot of people. And I think that the verdict had a similar effect on a lot of people that were tuned in to watching it."[31]

> The film is iconoclastic in that it portrays Grant as a complex human being and invites the audience to bear witness to his life.

THE INTERVENTION

One of the successes of the film was its response to the discourse practice of individualizing race. The mainstream media covered the story of Oscar Grant as a one-time occurrence, which completely disregarded the context of which this tragedy happened. It disregarded the frequency of similar stories. The film also responded to the practice of individualizing race when it gave little to no airtime to the BART officer's defense, which argued that the shooting was a tragic accident and that the BART officer thought he had pulled out his taser instead of his gun. The film concludes with a demonstration at the Fruitvale BART station, where Oakland residents are demanding justice for Oscar Grant and the many other young Black men who have encountered similar trauma and the many other young Black men who risk encountering similar trauma. The film deliberately does not focus on the viewpoint of this individual BART officer, but instead on the movement to stem systemic racism.

THE OUTCOME

Fruitvale Station responds to the challenge of restoring humanity to an individual, Oscar Grant, who, for simply his demographic characteristics of race, age, class and gender was deprived of this. Humanizing people and communities of color is a racially just frame that supplants the dominant frame. The rub lies in trying not to humanize in terms of what is understood to be white humanity, which often erases the reality of people of color humanity. The humanity of people of color, in the news, is devalued in a way that the humanity of white people is not. Culture and media reinforce the devaluation of people of color. Referring to the news coverage of the death of Trayvon Martin, Coogler said in an interview, "Oscar's story was always about the loss of potential with this young man's life. And so many young African-American males lose their lives to violence, to senseless violence in this country every day. So, I think that because it was something that was in the media that was a situation involving a young African-American male losing his life, people definitely drew parallels there."[32]

Coogler made the decision, with his directors, to return a sense of humanity to Grant, and by extension, to the young Black men that came before him and the young Black men that will come after him. He simultaneously supplanted the dominant frame of the inherent criminality of people of color through the development of the relationships he kept with his mother, daughter, and partner as well as through the emphasis on the complexity of the human experience filled with struggles and joy, contradictions, and resilience.

The rub lies in trying not to humanize in terms of what is understood to be white humanity, which often erases the reality of people of color humanity.

THE PROBLEM

The same law-and-order frame that negatively impacts immigrants and their families, and young people of color in their interactions with police and vigilantes alike, also plagues students of color in our public schools, particularly African-American boys and young men. For the past 10 years the Advancement Project has been combating harsh school-discipline policies that have disproportionately impacted youth of color with its campaign to end the "Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse" track. "The dominant frame that we are up against," explains the organization's co-director Judith Browne Dianis, "is that kids are bad and that we have to crack down on them."

Dianis traces the frame back to the 1980s, where "zero tolerance" became an outgrowth of the war on drugs. Transferred to the school setting, the frame labeled misbehaving kids as "bad kids" who were taking up too much time from the "good kids." School administrators imposed harsh discipline policies involving mandatory minimum suspensions and expulsions as the "solution," but the impact on students of color was devastating, though too few in the general public actually knew or talked about the policy impacts for at least a decade.

The Advancement Project launched its program in partnership with grassroots organizations across the country in order to support efforts on the ground, increase capacity for community-led work, and build bridges among organizations working to end the school-to-prison pipeline. "We embarked on making [zero tolerance] a bad term and a phrase that no school would want to be associated with," says the co-director. "Schools are places for opportunities, where young people get nurtured, and where young people get chances."

Dianis credits the Rev. Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow PUSH Coalition for raising the public's consciousness in November 1999 after the two-year expulsion of seven Black students who got into a fight during a high school football game in Decatur, Illinois. "There wasn't a whole public discourse around zero tolerance until Decatur," she remembers. The problem of zero tolerance in schools "wasn't getting the light of day" until the attention Jackson helped bring to the issue.[33]

Jackson applauded an Applied Research Center study released in December of that year which concluded suspension and expulsion policies in public schools in Los Angeles and other cities were racially biased. *Facing the Consequences: An Examination of Racial Discrimination in U.S. Public Schools* determined that African-American students were suspended or expelled at least twice their percentage of the total student population in Los Angeles, Denver, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Austin, Texas. Jackson called the statistics "astounding" and he criticized school districts for "choosing penal remedies over education remedies when it comes to disciplining students".[34]

The impact on students of color was devastating, though too few in the general public actually knew or talked about the policy impacts for at least a decade.

THE INTERVENTION

But The Advancement Project took the study of the issue far further to help push a new narrative while grassroots efforts were being organized and expanded. Their first report was "Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences Of Zero-Tolerance And School Discipline."[35] Dianis remembers looking almost completely in vain for recently published research before working on it, and their next report, "Derailed: The Schoolhouse To Jailhouse Track,"[36] which focused on school-based arrests, was similarly groundbreaking. The research "was part of changing the discourse too. And now its incredible how much research is out there," she marvels.

Structural racism is at the heart of the work that The Advancement Project does in education. As Dianis describes, it's about "how all of these systems are coming together to criminalize youth of color." Suspensions increase the likelihood of being criminalized and dropping out, as well as the use of police in schools. The organization has been focused on changing the national discourse simultaneously with their policy reform work.

"We focused on the racial profiling of school systems. We're trying to get schools to understand that these kinds of policies allow for racial bias, whether implicit or explicit, to seep into the system," explains Dianis. The program also is highly skeptical of allowing police to come into schools – particularly given histories of distrust of police in communities of color – because it perpetuates the system of mass incarceration. She argues that the there is a greater likelihood that the students' contact with police will wind up being bad contact. "We say 1) we've got George Zimmerman's in our classrooms and in our hall, 2) we've got police racial profiling in the streets and in the schools. The kids are being suspended for disrespect, insubordination, and woeful defiance. We want them to take these offenses off the table as suspendable offenses, hitting Black and brown kids in particular, [and] limiting the role of police in the schools.

Rather than focusing on the type of individual-level racism, or personal prejudice, that tends to dominate mainstream media's coverage of race and racism, the Advancement Project's reforms, according to Dianis, are talking more about implicit bias and attempting to get school districts to understand what that means and how that plays out. "Subjectivity and subordination [are] really about someone acting on their bias."

The Advancement Project presented their ideas at a conference during the summer for educators and law enforcement, which was received well. Dianis said some of the educators were disarmed because they're not being called racist. She sees the continuing work of the program as partially centered in this work of "getting schools to understand how people are acting on that implicit bias."

Suspensions increase the likelihood of being criminalized and dropping out.

Connecting with the Grassroots

"When we started our work, 'school-to-prison pipeline' wasn't even a term. 'We used Schoolhouse to Jailhouse' because it created a good mental visual," Dianis recalls. And while some educators have rejected or chafed at the term "school-to-prison pipeline" — according to Dianis, these educators say, "that's not what we're doing" — grassroots organizations the Advancement Project have worked with on the campaign have typically embraced it. "The movement has widely used it. The grassroots folks who are doing [the work,] they unabashedly use it. … That's a testament to the growth and strength of the movement and their ability to make the term more widely used." And gradually, she argues that it "became unpopular" for schools to use the zero-tolerance terminology.

In addition, because "there's more going on and there's more from the grassroots," the media is now covering more stories argues Dianis. "And because there is a field and a movement of folks, there's a lot more to cover. There are efforts to make sure that the stuff gets in the media. We make a concerted effort to get media attention to the stories and the victories. The victories shift the discourse. When a school district decides to say no to zero tolerance, it starts to beat back that frame of zero tolerance."

THE OUTCOME

As revealed by Race Forward's content analysis of U.S. newspaper articles on strict school discipline policies, usage of the term "school-to-prison pipeline" in mainstream media has increased impressively in the recent years, thanks to the work of the Advancement Project, the ACLU, the Harvard Civil Rights Project, and others who have promoted this metaphor. This expansion is particularly stark in comparison to the early days of this movement when the term "zero tolerance" dominated the public debate. For example, in the first three years (2000 to 2002) after Jesse Jackson helped draw national attention to harsh school discipline policies and racial disparities in Decatur, Illinois, there were more than 2,600 school-related articles using the term "zero tolerance policy," and not one of them used the explicit prison pipeline terminology.

The term "school-to-prison pipeline" appeared in mainstream coverage of strict school discipline policies only a handful of times from 2003 to 2006, ranging from just 0.7% to 1.5% of the total number of articles (more than 3,200) on the topic during those four years. That percentage increased from 4.2% to 8.7% during the next four years; followed by a jump to 18.2% in 2011; and, most dramatically, an increase in 2013 to 37.3% of strict school discipline articles using the term "school-to-prison pipeline." That is to say, less than ten years ago, the school-to-prison metaphor was explicitly used in less than one out of every one hundred articles on strict school discipline. Four to five years ago that percentage was approaching one out of ten. And entering 2014, greater than one out of every three articles on strict school discipline policies incorporate the "school-to-prison pipeline" terminology.

And the school-to-prison pipeline program has certainly not been simply about changing the discourse. With their partners, the Advancement Project has achieved considerable policy successes at the state and local levels, with major reforms to harsh school discipline policies [See Sidebar — Selected State/Local Major Policy Impacts].

"We make a concerted effort to get media attention to the stories and the victories. The victories shift the discourse."

FIGURE 3: EXPANDED USAGE OF "SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE" TERMINOLOGY IN U.S. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF STRICT SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY, 2000-2013

= TOTAL NUMBER OF STRICT SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY ARTICLES

= PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES USING "S-TO-P" TERM
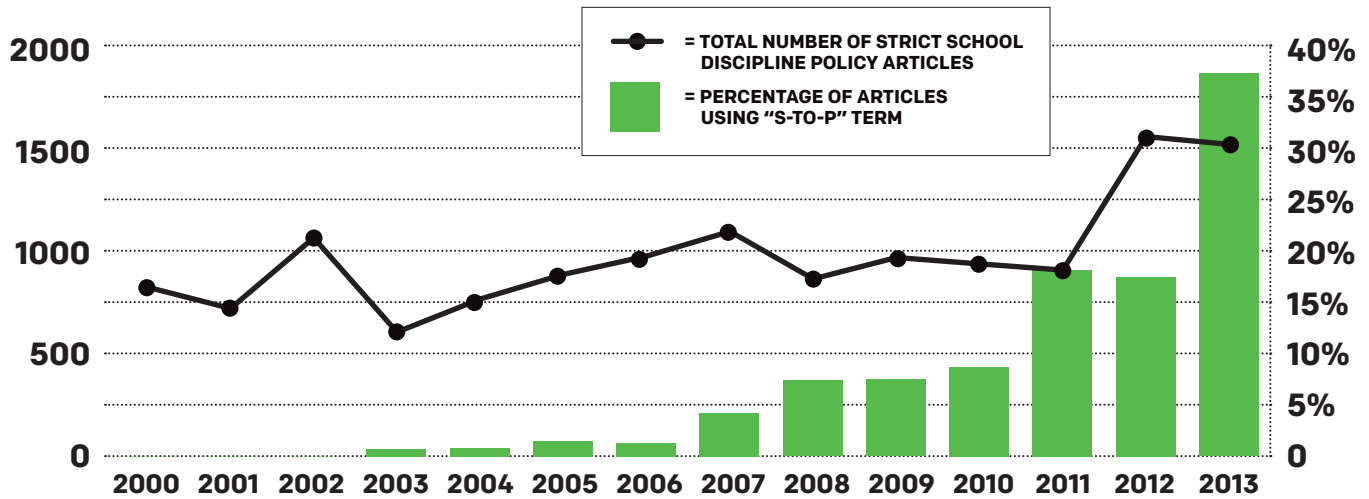
*Methodology: "Strict school discipline policy articles" defined as total number of articles using the term "school" with "zero tolerance policy" and/or "school-to-prison pipeline". Term searches conducted on Nexis media database. Time period yearly 2000-2013 Source parameters: All US News and Wires

SELECTED STATE/LOCAL MAJOR POLICY IMPACTS

COLORADO

Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, in partnership with the Advancement Project, achieved a legislative victory in May 2012, when the Colorado Legislature and governor signed into law a bill that:

• Recognizes that zero-tolerance policies result in involvement in the criminal or juvenile justice system and must be avoided when addressing minor misbehavior.

• Requires every district in Colorado to implement "proportionate" discipline.

• Requires districts to implement prevention strategies, restorative justice, peer mediation, and counseling.

• Improves disaggregated data collection around school-based arrest, tickets, and court referrals.

LOS ANGELES

• In 2013 the Labor/Community Strategy Center and partners won a youth-led victory when the Los Angeles Unified School District passed the School Climate Bill of Rights.

• The policy is the first ever ban on suspensions for "willful defiance," a tool that has caused racial disparities in school discipline and accounted for almost half of the California suspensions during 2011-2012.

• In addition the new policy requires the implementation of restorative justice programs, on-campus alternative discipline measures, and a decrease in the role of police officers in school discipline.

PHILADELPHIA

• In early 2011, Philadelphia-based Youth United for Change and Advancement Project released a joint report[37] exposing the impact harsh and exclusionary discipline policies had on school climate, academic achievement, and school safety.

• In August 2012 YUC and partners pressured the School Reform Commission to pass a new Code of Student Conduct. The code protects students from out-of-school suspension for minor infractions such as disrupting class, using profanity, skipping class, and violating the dress code. Instead they use five levels of progressive interventions accordant with the act. In addition, the code includes a provision protecting gender non-conforming students from discrimination based on the dress code.

MARYLAND

• In 2007 Advancement Project worked with Maryland groups Open Society Institute-Baltimore and the Baltimore City Public Schools as consultants in revising the district's student code of conduct.

• In July 2012, the State Board of Education banned zero-tolerance discipline policies.

• Advancement Project analyzed school discipline data, laws and polices, and then helped to draft a new policy that emphasized prevention and intervention measures to limit suspensions, expulsion and school-based arrests.

• "In just the first year, the number of out-of-school suspensions dropped by 26%."[38]

CHICAGO

• In June of 2013 the Chicago Board of Education approved a new student code of conduct that reduces suspension in Chicago public schools, specifically by eliminating the mandatory two-week suspension for minor offenses.

• Advancement Project's local partner Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE) was the major organization behind the victory.

Individual profiles for the 'Selected State/Local Major Policy Impacts' sidebar were referenced from the Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track website: Success Stories.[39]

The campaign's impact on discourse at the federal level has produced concrete movement toward greater accountability structures for at school districts across the nation. When Education Secretary Arne Duncan used the "school-to-prison" language himself, the Advancement Project knew that their efforts had begun to reach the federal level. In July 2011, Attorney General Eric Holder and Duncan expressed their joint concern about the rising rates of discipline issues, and the [racial] disparities therein, in our nation's schools. The two key members of the president's cabinet announced an effort to respond to the school-to-prison pipeline with the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, a collaborative project between the departments of Justice and Education designed to address the "school-to-prison pipeline" and "the disciplinary policies and practices that can push students out of school and into the justice system."[40] And the momentum continues.

In January of 2014, Advancement Project and their partners announced a landmark victory as representatives from the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Education (DOE) affirmed "racial discrimination in school discipline [as] a blatant violation of federal law."[41] Under new rulings by the Obama administration, the federal departments have issued legal guidelines that include close scrutiny of 'zero tolerance' practices for their potential violation of Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act, and requirements for data collection by school districts to demonstrate their discipline policies comply with federal law. The work of the Advancement Project campaign and their allies has driven the DOJ/DOE School Discipline Guidance to provide clarity and demand accountability around the conduct of school resource officers, adequate positive intervention resources like counselors and social workers and regulation around the abuse of suspensions and expulsions for minor misbehavior.

The shift in discourse and the work of this movement have also opened up a door for the Advancement Project and their grassroots colleagues and allies to sit at the table with major educator associations. "Now, community folks and folks from the Advancement Project are being asked to speak," reflects Dianis. "All of these conferences are putting us in front of educators to say, 'Enough.' What we're trying to do is to get our work to trend. We are at a point where that is picking up steam."

And Dianis sees the research as a critical piece of racial discourse change. "It wasn't just the work on the ground, but how do you take the research to push the new narrative that you're trying to create? ... Now we can say to educators, look at all these studies and there's not one study that says that suspensions help."

Nevertheless, there's still plenty of work to be done, including in states such as Florida, where zero-tolerance policies persist.[42] School shootings such as the 2012 tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newton, Connecticut, also provide an extra challenge, as they reinforce a law-and-order frame. Moreover, school administrators come and go, which means new administrators sometimes change back to harsh discipline policies if reforms are not institutionalized.

Still, "It's a different day," concludes Dianis, reflecting on the Advancement Project's upcoming 15th anniversary. "We're not where we need to be or where we want to be, but it's [been] an incredible journey."

"It wasn't just the work on the ground, but how do you take the research to push the new narrative that you're trying to create?"

SECTION 3:
Lessons and Recommendations

The case studies and profiles of recent racial discourse interventions and initiatives in the areas of immigration, criminal justice and education that are featured in this report , provide several lessons that can be generalized for racial and social justice advocates and others who wish to effectively advance values and narratives that will lead our society toward a racially equitable future. These lessons are accompanied by important considerations for organizations to bear in mind when selecting spokespersons for racial equity communications. And finally, we also provide recommendations for those wondering how to best address the current needs and opportunities to support the development of framing expertise, skills-building and collaboration.

LESSON 1
FRAME ACTIVELY AND INCLUSIVELY

Framing takes time, intellectual energy, and, sometimes, quite a bit of experimentation. But gaining control over how your issue is framed has immeasurable benefits. Racial justice advocates and communicators should frame issues in ways that suggest both deeply shared values to core audiences, such as fairness, human dignity, and family unity. Strong values propositions provide the foundation for frames that redefine a problem and transfer the responsibility for solutions from individual people of color to systems. The Advancement Project's shifting of the frame on school discipline from "zero tolerance" (based on not valuing children of color) to the "school-to-prison-pipeline" (based on valuing all children enough to keep them in school) is accessible and compelling. For Color of Change, the frame that secret policymaking has deadly, racist results is grounded in the value of democratic transparency, as well as human life. The values proposition must offer some form of redemption to those who, for whatever reason, have not yet acted against racial injustice.

In addition, strong frames are broad and inclusive enough relative to a campaign to hold multiple narratives and message. Narratives and messages may change throughout the course of a campaign. Narratives might vary because they can be presented to different kinds of constituents, and messages may shift as the action required changes. But frames should remain consistent for the sake of integrity and repetition. This might mean that you have to search for a frame big enough to hold the different audiences you want to speak to, and the arguments you wish to make. In Drop the I-word, the human dignity frame allowed the campaign to argue that the i-word was both dehumanizing and inaccurate. In settings where the inaccuracy narratives and messages were more prominent, there was always a tie back to the right of individuals not to be labeled in a discriminatory way.

LESSON 2
TELL STORIES THAT CONNECT INDIVIDUALS TO SYSTEMS

As many people are discovering and others have known for a long time, stories are the material that bring frames to life. Human beings have an endless appetite for stories that have compelling characters, real action, and a clear overriding idea. When crafting stories for a race dialogue, the critical work is to connect individual lived experiences to the policies and practices that constitute the rules of our society. In these case studies, we can see the groups unearthing both the written and the unwritten rules in their research, petitions, blog posts, and presentations. In considering the rules, it is critical to focus on the creation and perpetuation of both disadvantage and advantage. After all, disadvantage isn't generated in a vacuum for no reason at all. People need to understand multiple aspects of racial justice.

A primary goal of racial justice storytelling is to recast people of color in roles other than villain or victim. Revealing the agency of people of color, their willingness to take collective action, or to stand up for themselves, helps attract others to those strategies. Consider the way in which Color of Change featured the words and images of Trayvon Martin's parents as examples of courage and parental love.

USE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC MEDIA TO REVEAL AND EXPLORE SYSTEMIC RACISM

Artistic projects and products are key to shifting the way we think about a particular problem and can be particularly key to reaching audiences that would not be attracted to more traditional policy or news venues. Visual, aural, and verbal expressions often resonate more emotionally and quickly than straight polemic. Cultural change, represented by both attitudes and behavior, is also key to policy change, either by preceding new policies as a mere extension of how people are already living or by forming around the implementation of policy change. Thus, the demystification of a group of people, for example, Latino, Asian, and African immigrants, through accurate and plentiful media representation opens up space for the implementation of racial justice policies.

The development of new media technology has made it more possible than ever before to craft our own artistic offerings and disseminate them. Instead of relying solely on other media outlets to carry effective stories and images, racial justice advocates can generate media content and coverage directly. Migration is Beautiful offers some excellent examples for using art to convey humanizing frames and narratives, with particular emphasis on participatory projects that immigrants and friends can put their own stamp on. Fruitvale Station is another great example of an independent film that presents the victim of police brutality to be seen as a full human being.

ALIGN TIMING WITH POLITICAL STRATEGY

Discourse-shifting communications strategies are only one element of a larger political strategy to advance change. Other key activities include building a base of constituents and supporters, identifying key decision-makers to target and influence, developing a variety of actions to mount public pressure for change or examples of other elements. Timing the communications work to synchronize with the organizing strategy and with emerging political developments is critical to the success of both. The beauty of the Drop the I-word campaign was that it formed during a high point — born out of frustration in the immigrant rights movement but a stalling point in the immigration policy debate — and coincided with the entry of immigrant artists onto the cultural scene through CultureStrike. Ten or twenty years earlier, the same campaign may not have worked had the organizing context been different.

For example, Color of Change and others had been working to discredit ALEC for years. The national attention garnered by Trayvon Martin's killing gave the organization a new opportunity to expose ALEC's racist agenda and undermining of democracy, and Color of Change did not squander it. Similarly, the release of Fruitvale Station within one week of the Zimmerman verdict, during a time that the media was still debriefing the trial, helped grow and reinforce national public opinion against Stand Your Ground laws and other forms of violence in the name of policing.

DIRECTLY ENGAGE INDIVIDUAL REPORTERS AND MEDIA OUTLETS IN REFLECTING ON THEIR RACE REPORTING

When we see reporting that reveals either the absence of a systemic analysis or the presence of racial bias, bring this to the attention of the journalists. Most journalists want to be fair and accurate in their reporting. Direct and immediate feedback is often welcomed. Focus on the actual content and impact of the news story and avoid making any assumptions about the reporter's intentions. You can critique individual news stories or do some analysis across multiple stories to reveal patterns.

When giving feedback to journalists, use the opportunity to further the reporter's learning about systemic racism, unconscious bias and racial justice. The Drop the I-Word campaign involved many points of engagement between media consumers, direct stakeholders (particularly immigrants who are undocumented) and various media outlets.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING THE FIELD OF RACIAL JUSTICE FRAMING:

RECOMMENDATION 1

Dedicate resources to communications strategy In the field of racial justice. Reframing a race debate is challenging and requires significant investment if groups are to build the knowledge base, experience and evaluative tools to support this critical piece of strategy. In addition to increased funding of strategic communications, the field of racial justice organizations would benefit greatly from a landscape analysis of the current expertise of communications intermediaries, lessons learned by constituent organizations, forthcoming offerings of media outlets and technology purveyors. Such an analysis should produce a sense of the field's strengths as well as remaining gaps, which in turn could fuel a movement-wide strategy for increasing reframing capacity. Because much racial justice work is done through specific issue lenses, such as education or housing, the groups and funders related to those issues can assess those fields as well. But even without such a large-scale analysis, the field simply needs to devote more human energy to learning about the newest developments in communications and media practice, and to experimenting with various initiatives. Groups that are just starting to build this capacity may need to build a team of skilled volunteers initially and can use the many tools for communications planning that are available on the web.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Conduct further research on racial discourse, including within the independent media. More needs to be done to understand the dynamics behind media coverage of racial issues and stories, and to unearth potential solutions to narrow coverage. There have been good interventions into the coverage of particular communities, like the work of the Maynard Institute on the representations of black men and boys in the news. But communities of color are growing in size and diversity, and the complexity of racial realities combined with class, gender, sexuality, and other systems warrants a more robust base of knowledge.

In particular, solutions to poor coverage and low capacity for systemic reporting need to be elevated. For example, in each case study situation, independent outlets and alternative weeklies provided the first media opportunities to frame racial incidents systemically rather than individually. Outlining the pipeline between these outlets and the mainstream press would be of service to both parties, as well as to newsmakers. Assessing the education of journalists from this angle would also illuminate some of the training practices that support better reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Consolidate knowledge through convenings. The field of racial justice communications is growing rapidly, with a number of important practitioners and intermediaries emerging. Convening these actors regularly will support the two recommendations above and ensure that field building can proceed accordingly. Currently, the Allied Media and Facing Race conferences bring many together through accessible and affordable venues. Other gathering places include SXSW and the Personal Democracy Forum. The mainstream convenings tend to be expensive and not focused on racial justice — sometimes not at all diverse in terms of race, gender, class or sexuality. Yet, exposure to the tools for communications and reframing is critical to building the capacity of marginalized groups to assert their frames and narratives. Creating funding mechanisms that enable racial justice communicators to get to such gatherings could make a significant difference in field building.

SECTION 4:
Messengers Matter: Considerations for Choosing Spokespersons

Who is communicating about racial equity frames can be as important as what you are communicating. You want to be sure that your spokespersons are the right representatives to reinforce the frame and messages, add meaning and credibility, and help you connect with targeted audiences. Below are some considerations:

1. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS
It may be stating the obvious, but people of color, who are the most directly and adversely affected by the race issues, are perfectly able to speak on race issues. Hearing from a real person with a face, a voice, emotions, and a family humanizes the issue so others can understand, empathize, and appreciate why it matters. This does not mean that all your spokespersons on race-related matters need to be people of color but these are choices we need to make deliberately, rather than by rolling with the status quo. Diversifying spokespeople helps illuminate patterns and impacts that help people understand the systemic nature of racism. Multiple spokespersons also can convey to an audience that your solutions have widespread support.

2. SPEAK TO THE INTERSECTIONS
Choose spokespersons who can talk across "isms," who see the connections between race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, religion, and other salient dynamics. You do not want your spokespersons to lift up race at the expense of gender or sexuality, or dismiss ethnic or class differences. Identify racial justice spokespersons who can convey core values—fairness, inclusion, unity—and project a common vision that uplifts all communities.

3. ALIGN WITH AUDIENCE
When developing your race communications strategy, it's important to have a clear sense of your audience. Getting specific about who you most need to connect with or convince will help you develop more tailored messages that have a better chance of resonating than generic, one-size-fits-all messages. Ask yourself if there is a specific demographic you are trying to engage and activate — e.g., Latinos in their teens and twenties. Or is there a specific power-holder or decision-maker you are trying to influence or impress, such as your city council members or state legislators? If people in your targeted audience can see themselves, racially or culturally, represented by any one of your spokespersons, they will feel more personally connected to your issue.

4. ALIGN WITH MEDIA FORMAT
We now have more forms of communication than ever — television, radio, print media, all kinds of social media, etc. — and each has its own unique features. By knowing your audience and what kind of media they use, you can better match the appropriate spokespersons and messengers. For example, many communities of color, in some demographics, actually have higher rates of smart phone usage than white people. So selecting messengers with a following, whose communications will be well and widely received on mobile devices could be a good fit. A wonderful writer may not be so great on camera. An older person may not have the technological savvy to reach youth who are rapidly engaging in new social media technologies.

SECTION 5:
Acknowledgments and Endnotes

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[33]Excerpts collected from an interview with Judith Browne Dianis by Race Forward staffer on 1 November 2013. See also "In wake of ruling, don't forget the kids". The State Journal-Register. Springfield, IL. 12 January 2000.

[34]"Suspensions". City News Service. Los Angeles. 15 December 1999.

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[41]Claudio Sanchez, "Obama Administration Has Little Love for 'Zero Tolerance'". 8 January 2014. http://www.npr.org/2014/01/08/260808007/obama-administration-has-little-love-for-zero-tolerance

[42]For more, see "Still Haven't Shut Off the School-To-Prison Pipeline: Evaluating the Impact of Florida's New Zero-Tolerance Law"