



NFG's 40 YEARS STRONG NATIONAL CONVENING SERIES

Youth of Color Taking the Lead: Collaborative Leadership and the Path to Power

September 10, 2020

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>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Welcome. Everybody, it is so great to see you here as the co-chair of the Neighborhood Funders Group, I'm welcoming you.

My name is Amoretta Morris. I'm the Director of National Community Strategies at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. And this is my political home in philanthropy. For those that are members and close friends of NFG, hello again. For those who are newer, we welcome you to learn more about it

In addition to being excited about today's offering in my role as co-chair of the board here, I also am excited as a former youth organizer. And so as somebody who started organizing when I was 16 in Houston and appreciated the adult allies and those who supported my development and political education and then as a youth organizer when I moved to D.C. working with formerly incarcerated young people and their families to advance alternatives to cages for young people, I am so inspired by the power of the work that is represented and the folks who are going to be sharing with you today.

The way in which young people are leading in this moment and have always led in moments of transformation for our country and the world is unrivaled. So I look

forward to you being able to hear more about how you can support these amazing young people. How you can learn more about this work and how you and your foundations or institutions, donor collaboratives can step up your investment and engagement in this work. As I was thinking about today and the timing of this conversation, I -- it made me to think about the DNC.

For those who were listening to Vice President Biden when he accepted the Democratic nomination, you may recall that he opened his speech quoting Ella Baker if you are like me and from the organizing tradition I am you were surprised to hear that in that space. He quoted her with one of the pieces that many of us are familiar with. Her saying give light and the people will find a way.

We know this is absolutely a time where we need light. We are bearing witness to violence in our communities and across the country. To moments of upheaval, and we have fires that are raging in our hearts and upon this land as changes in the political and physical climate that demand our attention. Thankfully we also have light bearers.

And the people that you will hear from today, they are speaking truth of power. They are speaking words of liberation. They are helping us to see what our dear sister Valerie has shared as a country perhaps we are not experiencing the darkness of the tomb, but rather the darkness of the womb. That through the bold leadership they are inviting us to be open to the radical light that is being born and new in our world and in our communities.

I am so delighted they are going to be able to share with us today. I am excited about what they have to offer. I welcome you into this conversation and I also welcome you into the first conversations that are a part of this continued 40 Years Strong convening series so you will be able to find those other conversations that are coming up throughout the rest of the fall on the NFG website so please do take part and join us.

For now, I would remind you that something else that Ella Baker told us is that in order for us as poor and oppressed people to be part of the society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. Know that you are about to hear from light bearers who are about the business of radical change and transformation. And they are inviting us into that world with them.

And so with that, I will turn it over to Alejandra.

>> ALEJANDRA RUIZ: Thank you so much for that grounding introduction into this panel. I'm very excited to be in community with you all. Thank you so much for participating in this kickoff session for NFG's fall webinar series. I think to get us started, I just want to acknowledge that I know that many of us have

been playing a leadership role in supporting your communities, your movement partners through the pandemic and over the last few months as we've seen increased police brutality and making sure that you are supporting the engagement of organizations and center Black liberation and push for operation aligning transformational solidarity within your institutions and within your roles. And demands that are going to really help us shift to the kind of movement and transformative work that moment is calling us for.

I have to say that although at times it has felt odd for YEF to continue in the processes of the daily work, we do it because we know that for YEF as a philanthropic partner for youth of color, it's necessary for us to do so. And we are committed to continuing to trust and follow and fund the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and youth of color. And we are close that this is the way to build.

So just want to welcome you to this. Thank you for joining us as hopefully this session will serve to re-energize yourself after hopefully a weekend where you have found sometime for rest and joy as we step into this new season. This month is also my birthday so I feel like I'm starting off my birthday celebration in a very exciting way.

During this session you will be hearing from an all young women of color panel that represents YEF movement markers including from the NAACP Youth and College Division, One Arizona, Women Engaged. They will be sharing with us innovative ways which they have adapted their work to meet the multitude of social and environmental shifts that 2020 has presented. And also sharing with us the ways which they are engaging a new wave of newly politicized young people through issue based organizing and meeting them where they are at.

And we will also dive into some of the infrastructures and partnerships. What do they currently look like in the states and the national level and do envisioning what they can look like with additional support, especially for Black, Indigenous, and youth of color led focused organizations that play a key role in advancing organizing efforts, planning and mobilizing that shifts our behavior around civic participation. And definitely getting into what it is that we all need to do to ensure that the defining youth vote is present at the polls in 54 days at this point.

So these are the leaders that are going to guide us through this new decade. And I'm just looking forward to being in this conversation with you all as we listen, learn and really make a commitment to take the leap that will take us towards a dignified and just democracy.

Before I move on into the conversation, I just want to do a quick introduction of YEF.

So as I shared I'm Alejandra Ruiz. I'm the executive director at the Youth Engagement Fund. In November, it will be two months since I have been in this role. I grew up undocumented in New York City and got involved in the immigrant youth movement

about 16 years ago so that's how I come into this space and that is definitely reflected in our approach to leadership.

So the Youth Engagement Fund is the only donor collaborative that is dedicated to increasing the civic participation and power of young people. We are led by all young women of color, team under the age of 35. Look at me trying to scrape off some ages.

And we are really trying to create intentional pathways that are dismantling structural racism and white supremacy and that are providing pathways and new ways to expand the electorate that will ultimately transform American democracy and the elected officials and leaders that we are going to be seeing over the next 10 and 20 years guiding us into this new space.

So without further adieu, we are going to go ahead and get started with introductions. As I shared, I'm going to start with Tiffany. So Tiffany is the director of the NAACP Youth and College Division. And Tiffany, if you could spend some time telling us about who you are. A little bit about your organization and any information that will be helpful for us.

And I think for this first session if you could just dive into what -- how did your organization and membership adapt into the evolving and social political dynamics of this year, and particularly what did collaboration look like across movements in your organizational partners.

>> **TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN:** Hi, everybody. Good afternoon. Calling in from D.C., but I just got back yesterday from Pittsburgh and before that I was in Louisville, Kentucky, fighting for justice and Breonna Taylor. We got -- looking away from my screen -- that Attorney General Daniel Cameron who has not charged the officers is on the nomination list for the Supreme Court of the United States by Donald Trump.

There is a lot going on right now and I appreciate not only the invitation to be a part of this discussion, but also the recognition of the severity of the moment we are in right now. There is a lot going on and we invited a lot of folks to calls and Zooms. And we want to make this as purposeful as possible. And making sure that we are honest. And by making sure y'all really understand what we are doing.

This is so necessary for y'all to really understand how organizers are living not just jobs but their daily lives to support members across the country. I will start with about myself.

I'm originally from Los Angeles, California, born and raised. Oldest daughter of a single mother from Algiers, New Orleans, originally. I went to UC Santa Cruz. There are folks on the chat who are also banana slugs, I see y'all and classes 2011. I moved from L.A. to Santa Cruz in a transition where my mother said make sure you go to college or

graduate. My mother had not had that experience. There was very little she could give me to support that process I didn't have a car or internet. This was when AOL was a thing. We didn't have a computer at home.

And so I made it my mission to figure out on my own how to get to college and I remember my college counselor at Birmingham High School, which is now a charter school. Dr. Black told me she was a white woman, Tiffany, you aren't going to college. You should go to community college in the neighborhood and get a job.

I was like, that's not what my momma told me to do. You have a different agenda. My mom reigns over you. I'm going to college. I applied to all of the UCs. I got into UC Santa Cruz and I'm so glad I did.

And the Black student union at the school, the university, did a student initiative outreach program to bring me to the university for free. I went on the program and fell in love with the students. There were 74 other kids. High school seniors who were admitted to Santa Cruz and said we wanted to show you what it was like to be a Black student at historically white university. I went, enjoyed it and had a great time and enrolled.

My first year, my first quarter enrolling and moving into the dorms, the regents of the California school system increased our tuition 32%. I was Vice-President of the student government. 18,000 students, 300 and maybe 70 of us were African-American. Vice-President and then I ran for President and while in Sacramento lobbying against tuition increases, somebody hung a noose on my door.

So I tell my students and my organizers all the time, sometimes this work chooses us and sometimes we have the blessing of being able to choose the work. My mom told me to go to college. That's it. I did not know that I would have to fight to get into school.

That I would then have to fight to stay in school because they rose my tuition. One of my peers or classmates or a student at the university would threaten my Blackness by hanging a noose on campus and resulted in no investigation and no announcement by the chancellor at the school. You can imagine a young Black girl and I wasn't ball headed at the time. You can imagine a young Black girl with braids who is a minority at historically white university who is trying to do one thing. Go to college and graduate.

Who is with faced racial violence but also financial and economic violence, educational violence, that the rage that I felt that the fear that I had, that the mystery of what was possible and the mystery of tapping into my power and collective power, what that must have been like for someone like me.

I'm thinking about the students who are in school right now. And how my students at

Florida at the university had a not only a hate crime on campus against the Latinx and the Latinx community, but also are facing COVID-19 and are also facing police brutality because McDade was murdered and answers have not been delivered.

A trans woman who was shot and killed by the police two months ago. And they got 16 people arrested yesterday at an action that happened and my students are not just trying to go to school and learn and do what our families encouraged us to do to pursue higher education and fighting a national pandemic and racial pandemic, economic pandemic, and educational pandemic.

And we have to as organizers be aware of that. When the transition happened for our transition at the national NAACP was March 11. When that happened, our original three goals of how we organize our work which is always leadership development, institutional capacity building, so that's building the NAACP chapters. We have 320 of them around the country.

And the last one is campaign direct action organizing. Those had to pivot -- a lot of the things we were doing because this generation of folks I work with, the generation Z and millennials. We grew up in the transition and know social media and on-line access. We had to help people pivot how to use those tools in ways that don't exhaust people. That take up lanes and take advantages of ways that people need to be engaged.

And also give them the best practices because a lot of them had not been full-blown experts in digital communication or on-line communications or theories of media. We had not had those conversations with folks because we didn't need to.

We hosted a series of trainings for our folks locally in our regions, in our states. We did over 53 on-line programs across the country that wielded somewhere between 14,000 to 14,500 new organizers that we gathered.

We hosted a program called Black civic summer that was a five series Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. civic engagement training. We focused on Black people versus the police. Black people versus the vote. Black people versus the census. Black people versus elections. And Black people versus the Black agenda.

Where we brought in guests and partners from Planned Parenthood, from Move On Texas, from United We Dream, from the Alliance To Reclaim Our Schools. We had elected officials. We had civic engagement directors from other organizations. We had Vote.org, our national partner. We had the Black owned voter guide that's non-partisan. We had them join us.

We had an opportunity where folks from local communities and organizers for the New Georgia Project or Dream Defenders came to join us to have conversations about the work that they are doing. And then in real life on those calls we had examples of

ways people can get involved and engaged to take direct action to show them how easy it is. How easy it is to do it and how easy it is to track it.

We then had an opportunity where everybody across the world, literally the world, was contacting me and our Youth and College Division asking for comments about the police murders across the country about elections, about voter suppression, about schools coming back, about student debt.

It's a huge issue and the bills had been arriving and canceling and student loan repayment. We have to have an intentional way of making sure that I'm not the face of the organization because I am that. I want to make sure that members in the NAACP are the ones who are taking up so much space across the country.

Major Woodall who is the youngest youth college President we had in Georgia in its history who is 24 years old. The President of the adult state conference. Not the youth and college portion but the adult state conference. We put him on more platforms and stages.

Jackson who is a student at Fresno State University, who is the President of the NAACP, we put her on more platforms because she organized 3,500 person March and got appointed to the police advisory council in Fresno. We had platforms for Kyra Mitchell my chair for the university committee. We had more platforms of the video and viral you saw it and didn't realize it was her but Redmond, a 22-year-old from Minneapolis. Her video went viral after the press conference after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

We are seeing right now in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with Jacob uplifted our students there. Uplifted in Kentucky after the Breonna Taylor case and the law was passed and Jada Hampton who was arrested and freedom was featured not only in the Huffington Post but the New York Times.

We have gotten 59 young people who had national public speaking engagements. And that's part of the leadership development strategy. And then I know that the NAACP had made a public remark the board of directors had take an national stance to pause the in-person gathering because of our safety for COVID-19.

I want us to sit for three seconds -- I want to sit for a second and think about this.

How serious is the moment where young people will take to the streets regardless of COVID-19 to demand justice for Black lives.

How serious are we in the moment right now where young people are walking out of school during COVID-19 to demand justice because of hate crime happened on their campus. We had 17 national rallies that happened with our students across the country who said, listen, NAACP, we recognize that you care about our safety, but right

now we cannot afford to sit inside. We can't afford to be virtual. We can't afford to sit on a Zoom or Instagram live. We have to put our bodies on the line and be in the streets.

And so I had to join my students in Louisville, Kentucky, these last two weeks to support them on the ground because of what's happening. I had to make sure that I supported my people in Pittsburgh and Kenosha, Wisconsin, and even here in D.C. when the Marches and protests were happening I had to make sure to support them out loud and in person. We had to pivot to virtual because of COVID, we should recognize that the principles of organizing have not changed and are still important.

I wanted to give you all the road map to see the work we have done and see what the tension and what the climate is currently across the country with young Black students and look forward to the rest of the discussion and thank you for having me again.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you so much for that grounding and really just sort of bringing us like you said to the severity of the moment and the role of particularly young people of color and the type of leadership that they are stepping into during this climate

Next we will have Montserrat Arredondo and share a little bit about One Arizona and how you all have adapted to the changes of this year.

>> **MONTSERRAT ARREDONDO:** Yeah, thank you, thank you everyone for having me and for being here today. We have had Zoom calls all day every day and it means a lot to have active and on this call hearing from us and from other groups that you may not be familiar with.

Again, my name is Montserrat Arredondo. I am from Phoenix, Arizona. I go by Montse. I'm born and raised in Arizona and I'm a daughter of an undocumented woman who to this day does not have a path to citizenship or a way to become -- to get a legal status in our country.

I grew up really in a community that understood that our parents were dealing with something that was a disadvantage. Whether that was language. Many of us were Latino or Vietnamese, or an actual legal status like my mother who was undocumented.

We were a very tight-knit community. I grew up in public housing so we shared the same back yard and went to the same school and then the same high school and our transition to college a lot like Tiffany was a challenge. We knew we would go to college it was something that our moms told us we were going to do. And we were set to make

that happen.

And in order to apply for college and to apply for resources like FAFSA, folks had to provide a Social Security number. So at that time some of the young people in my life, my same age, a lot of them a lot smarter than me, were finding out for the first time that they were undocumented. This is back in 2009.

Their parents hadn't told them that or they didn't have -- and they also didn't have a time and a place that they needed it or had to know. So it was a huge challenge. It was a rude awakening of. A tight-knit community realizing we were going to have to move apart. Some of us went to college and some of us were not able to.

But we wanted to do something about it. We were transitioning from high school to college and we started to look out into the community and I found a space called -- it is part of One Arizona. To do some civic engagement work.

At the time they just done canvassing in their neighborhood to what was the issue that was cared about the most. This is a highly immigrant community. Mostly Latino. And they all said education.

So these are all parents that were prioritizing education over immigration. Something that was affecting their life in the long term, but they were saying what is affecting you right now.

In 2009-2010 we were hoping to pass reform. We were on a campaign reform for America with a national campaign. Something you might have been a part of that, Teresa. And soon we found out that SB1070 show me your papers law was coming through our legislature here in the state of Arizona. And this is a law that came after many years of being under sheriff Joe -- Joe Arpaio because he was separating families. Terrorizing communities.

Putting up checkpoints and having what is known as tent city his jail in our state for many years, even before SB1070 happened and that was really the tipping point because it was a lot that affected not just undocumented people, but anybody that didn't look white.

So you could be asked for your passport in the street. You could be stopped because you have particular bumper stickers. We saw trains that police were getting, the sheriffs were getting talking, about rosaries around the car mirror or particular bumper stickers and things like that.

So this is something that affected a lot of people. We saw a huge uprising of people. We spent 109 days at the capitol without leaving. We would spend the night there to show the moral dilemma that was SB1070. Our governor at the time who became governor after Janet Napolitano, our governor at the time who was elected, went to

work with Obama. And she signed the bill. And got a huge amount of support. Again, my life shifted realizing that the state of Arizona, the bubble that I lived in, the poor community that in my life that was a place of support, a place that I trusted everyone, was actually a lot bigger. Arizona was huge and there was a lot of racist people in our state and that Arpaio is an elected person and people were choosing to have him in our state.

So we mobilized and in 2010 one Arizona became a coalition. Immigrant rights groups came together like mi familia. And Promise Arizona and a labor rights group came together to form this coalition so we can maximize the little resources that we had. So we would help to keep track of where everybody was at and then keep track of all of the work we were doing.

In 2012, we did 12,000 voter registrations that I was a part of that. And we were able to start a new movement. And I think since 2010, the next big wave of organizations that have started the organizing groups that have come up was in 2016 after -- when the presidential race was coming up and after we actually saw our coalition grow not just regionally as other parts of the state, but also by constituency groups.

Now we have Black-led organizations, Asian American-led organizations, and our biggest partner right now that we are working to ally with us our Native vote program with Native-led organizations as part of One Arizona. And we saw that shift after the presidential race and now have gone from 14 organizations in 2010 to 25 organizations to this day.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you so much for sharing that arc of engagement and of growth. Hearing you, it brings me back to inviting you all in for a survey that power building takes time. And when we and when we are engaging with a lot of the youth leaders that are here now, a lot of youth leaders got involved in 2010 when there was a lot of sort of policies that were attacking them and their communities.

And I remember last fall I went to Arizona. It was sort of a last minute trip and I reached out to Montse, hey, I would love to meet with the partners of One Arizona. I thought there were going to be six folks showing up and there were 22 groups that showed up on a Friday morning to have breakfast with me. And it was amazing.

So I think it's important for us to really think about what the conditions are that we are in now in 2020. To ensure that the infrastructure and the work is supported for the long run.

So we are going to move on now to Georgia where I was there in February. I was one of the last visits I was able to make before the shut down and we had started having a conversation about the youth civic engagement space in Georgia and hoping to maybe have a similar breakfast meeting in the spring that unfortunately did not happen.

But I got an opportunity to meet Michelle there and she said there is over 60 young people in Georgia that are connected on-line and engaging in a lot of the civic engagement work happening there.

So, Michelle, if you could just introduce yourself. Share with us about Women Engaged, and how Women Engaged has adapted given the shift of 2020.

>> **MICHELLE WILSON:** Thank you so much for that introduction and thank you all for being here today. Yes, my name is Michelle. I go by they/she pronouns and based here in Atlanta, Georgia, where we do a bulk of our work in the surrounding areas.

I came to Women Engaged about three years ago when I was 26 and my pathway into organizing has definitely been a long way. I was just a young person who was always very much had an affinity for political engagement. So I got involved fairly early on. I was born and raised in Campton, Missouri. And spent a lot of time doing political work there with the Campton city youth commission and leading that effort.

I moved to Arkansas and spent some years there for undergrad and then moved here to Atlanta, Georgia, initially for graduate school and now I found a nice space here with Women Engaged.

On the screen we have a picture of our founder on the left and Margaret on the right. They founded Women Engaged in 2014 to address some of the issues when it comes to the transactional nature of the civic engagement when it comes to engaging with Black folks especially Black youth, Black women, Black Sims of other youth of color. We wanted to do deeper investment to not only talking about the important civic engagement but curating and nurturing the youth leadership in our communities.

We are at the intersections of civic engagement and reproductive justice and move in the reproductive justice framework it was created in 1994 by a group of 12 Black women in film who was to expand the conversation around reproductive rights to be more inclusive of Black people. Indigenous people. and other people of color for so many issues that impact us in ways that not necessarily been talked about before.

So we launched with our flagship program we vote we rise which is our integrated voter engagement program. And we not only provide voter education but also leadership development. And that goal is to really take move and low -- move new and low propensity voters to be more active and engaged. Not just in the voting process but civic participation beyond the ballot box. We target areas in southwest Atlanta and the surrounding Atlanta metro area. We recently expanded to seven counties.

And the picture on the right I have a really soft spot for because when I first started in

2017 like my first day I was training these two young folks. They were at students at the Spelman College at the time and I think really speak to the heart of the work that we do with our program because now they are also colleagues with me. They work with me in strategy sessions because they are now organizers in their own right.

There is Quincy and they work with another reproductive justice organization here in Georgia and the other person on the -- I'm going -- it's Quincy on the left. Sorry, y'all. Orientation of PowerPoint. And then we have Jill on the right who is also another grass roots organizer doing a lot of work around the current uprisings that are happening in Georgia and in the aftermath of George Floyd and then also Rayshard Brooks who was murdered at the Wendy's in early June. I wanted to highlight their leadership and talk about that we through our program see this as more of an investment.

Integrative voter engagement is about deepening relationships and being able to take the conversations that we have behind closed doors and it really bringing them to light to hold our greater community and the elected officials accountable to really addressing those needs.

It really comes with centering those kind of conversations because in our program we definitely uplift the history which oftentimes most of the time people will parachute into Black -- predominantly Black communities and tell us what we need to vote for and how their vote will do something for them and then seldom see the benefits.

Where in turn we should be listening to our communities and hearing what they need and then talking about how we can see that in progress. We view our work year-round regardless if there is an election. We are oftentimes on the ground knocking on doors at bus stations, over the phone, through text message. Just trying to engage with our communities to understand what's going on.

And when we don't have an election we are conducting deep dive canvass to know about the issues that resonate with our folks and providing pathways for different training and opportunities to expand their understanding on how to use the tools necessary because our belief is really about neighbors talking to neighbors, community talking to community to really build movement and power.

Of course, with 2020 being what it is, we are no longer really knocking on doors. So we definitely switched over to remote and digital outreach like other folks have uplifted. Tiffany mentioned about before about providing this training for folks. Especially for those of us who are millennials, GenZers because we came up with technology with a little bit of a challenge in a sense that I don't know what the proper term is for the clicker on your computer but that's what I call it.

Realizing there were different barriers to really knock down not initially but we were able to support our team. First we were able to retain all 15 of our canvas members. And we quickly pivoted to a remote and digital strategy well before the state response

in Georgia had actually taken place. What that meant was we made sure that people had equipment, whether it was hot spots, laptops, cell phones so they could be set up where they are at home and feel supported in that.

We also then quickly changed our script. At the time we were in the midst of doing our outreach for the primaries here in Georgia which we all know was a fiasco come June, but initially this was in March. So we quickly changed our script to include a community response question to really start connecting our folks and resources to assist them in their common need.

We really want to prioritize the humanity of our community, and highlight the fact that we are in the midst of a pandemic that disproportionately impact Black communities in the context of the current uprising and the ongoing systemic issues as well as just access to health care because Georgia is, of course, one of the states that has not expanded Medicaid here. So there is a huge health care wage gap when it comes to getting access to services here. We want to make sure to create a community response question.

And with that we gave crisis management training for our team members just so they can be trained on how to engage in those conversations. And over time we have been able to actually call back and give us the assistance to over 200 people so far who have needed that type of assistance.

Then just the shift in digital training and outreach really is about adapting and still trying to create spaces of connection while also honoring the humanity of folks and where they are.

So for us you will see on the right that's actually a picture of our team about a couple of weeks ago just taking time to take a break, celebrate each other. Have some fun.

I think that's really where we are now is that in the midst of this there is definitely deeper need to have deeper conversations with our folks. And the work that we are currently engaging we then work for the primaries and some are doing voter registration. And what that means is that it's not enough just to put a post out online any more. It really does take multiple touches and being very intentional and really having the patience and the grace to have those conversations knowing that the world is literally on fire.

So sometimes -- and it translates to how it was before the pandemic when -- before we were practicing social distancing where oftentimes we would go to bus stations and sometimes I would see somebody there, the same person every week I was there and it wasn't until week six or seven that they finally decided to engage with me and we are still having those same type of encounters now just individual space. Of course, that in mind knowing that because people are a little bit more bold when they are behind screens or when there is a text message that some of the responses might

be a little different.

Our biggest thing right now is about making sure that we adapted our trainings and tools to set up our canvas team to be really great organizers especially with the new way of normal as we lean more into the digital compass -- organizing and also to really just know that we are supporting people and actualizing that humanity of folks.

When the uprising started happening, we made sure to have space and continue to debrief the things going on in our community as well as have that opportunity to talk about current events just so they can be better prepared when they are having conversations with phones and nothing could take them by surprise and they feel more comfortable and engage in conversation.

So I am going to end it at that. Thank you.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you so much, Michelle, for sharing about the work that is happening in Georgia. I think Michelle's presentation really lifts up the way that a lot of YEF movement partners approach civic and voter engagement work which is through issue based organizing, through talking to young people and their communities about issues that affect them and their daily life and have tangible effects on how they live and then making those connections with them about how is that connected to having agency over their vote.

So to changing the behavior around civic participation and what does it mean to become lifelong civic participants and create that culture within their families. I am a product of investment in young people and I will forever bet on young people and I feel like in the conversations young people are making tables in their kitchen tables. Having conversations around abortion access and climate justice, around agency over their votes with their families while they are having their meals.

So I think we want to hear from you all. I think when we talk about the youth civic engagement sector, sometimes it can feel like there is sort of abstract idea, what does it mean? How are people defining it. And one of our -- actually, question go back to the previous slide. I do want to make a point on that.

One of the research partners that we work with is CIRCLE and they have been doing a lot of work and continue to do work around the youth vote. And over this past year YEF has been in conversations with them around expanding the breadth of their youth electoral significance index which is a tool that sort of helps identify where young people and the youth vote can make a big impact.

And over this last year they have included additional factors that really allow us to sort of get into the depth of the leadership and the involvement of young people of color. And if we -- and I'm going to put here on the chat the link to it. If anyone is interested, we can also do a follow-up with this. But in this last reiteration of it they

saw that young people could have the power to change what the election looks like in places like Alabama and Arizona.

So we want to just check in with you all to see what is the youth civic engagement, what you know about the youth civic engagement sector as we get ready to take a break and then move into the next phase of the conversation.

For this part, this is going to be an interactive piece of the presentation. We are going to be putting if you look on the side of the chat, there is a link to a jam board which is a nice tool where you can use post-its so respond to your question. With very two questions on the jam board that we want to engage you with. The first question is -- ooh, let me see. Okay.

The information even presented with today confirm or challenge your understanding of youth of color leadership in this engagement sector. And what opportunities do you see for youth of color leaders and organizations working to transform our democracy. We will give you all a few minutes to add your notes on here. Let us know if you have any trouble. We sort of try to set up a system where everybody is not crowded with their post-its. If you can put in your answer space the response to the first letter of your first name as noted here. I'm going to go in here and do an example for folks.

We are just trying to gauge audience knowledge. I see folks putting in their postings. Thank you. And thank you for engaging with us in this activity and with this tool. I'm going to read out the questions again.

We have two questions on here. The first one is: What comes to mind when you think of the youth civic engagement sector? What do you want to know about it? And the second question is what opportunities do you see for youth of color leaders and organizations working to transform democracy?

We have a couple of folks new to the space. Thank you for joining. Later on we will share our contact. We are happy to continue this conversation.

Some folks are sharing I would love to hear more about leadership development strategy, the ingredients. Youth of color leaders are our future and we must be hyper focused on building and expanding.

What opportunities are there? Voter engagement and community mobilizing. Setting spaces and audiences from a political education for the civic engagement. Yes. All righty.

All right, any last posts? We are about to wrap up this piece. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts. And we will be sharing this with you all afterwards so you have the information.

So we are almost getting ready to take a break. But we are going to do one more activity before that and that is a poll. So if we could pull up the -- so if we could pull up the poll please, at this time.

So everyone in this audience, our philanthropic partners, we are trying to get a sense of what the involvement is in terms of supporting youth work. The first question if you can see it now, are there youth organizations in your grantmaking portfolio? Yes or no. And then if so, if you could estimate what percentage of your philanthropic's institution budget is guided to youth of color organizations in particular. So we will give a few homes for that. I'm realizing I forgot to scroll down on the poll.

So we have two more questions. Yes, I think the third one is really -- we are always engaging in rapid response funding. So we are trying to get a sense of what that looks like in terms of supporting youth of color led or serving organizations as well. So we will end the poll in three, two, one.

So let's see what we have here. For the first one, yes, the majority of you do have youth organizations in your grant making portfolio. What percentage of your budget is going to youth of color-led organizations? The vast majority said less than 25%.

The third question is what percentage of your rapid response funding for any area of work went to youth of color-led or serving officers? The answer is also less than 25% for the vast majority.

And do you believe that youth of color are key stakeholders in shaping a transformative democracy? The answer for that is 100%. All right!

So I think we are here to try to get some alignment in regards to our belief that young people of color are key stakeholders in shaping our democracy and getting our budgets and funding support to match that. So thank you all so much for sharing.

We are going to go ahead and take a ten minute break and when we come back into the next piece we are going to dive deeper into some of the work, like, what does the infrastructure look like -- dig a little bit more like youth collaboratives and what the work is going to be looking like from now until November. When do we want folks to come back?

So if everyone can be back and joining us at 1:05 p.m. eastern so we can continue this conversation. Thank you all and have a good break.

[BREAK]

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** All righty, welcome back, everyone. I hope you had a nice break. And

are ready to continue with the same energy for the remaining of this conversation.

So we saw a lot of things around how the importance of youth leadership and how folks are activated and also what that means in terms of the work that is happening at the local level. And what opportunities that are there.

So why are we talking about the youth civic engagement sector? Over the course of the time that we have been in this space we have learned that the youth civic engagement sector is a vibrant multi-faceted and dynamic space.

It's also a very large space and it involves a lot of organizations, local, state based and a national focused and leaders that are advancing issue based organizing to try to proactively change the behavior around civic participation. As I shared really is sure that young people of color in their communities are having ownership and agency of what their vote means and what that looks like tangibly in their every day life.

And I feel like when I think about 2020, I feel like we are really in a moment of transformational solidarity and engagement where it's important for us as philanthropic partners who are value and movement aligned to get behind the leadership and innovation of youth-led focused organizations and leaders that will be organizing the energy of their peers and communities in civic participation and upcoming. And some have done so through the primaries this summer. And really as we are leading up to the general election.

This is a pivotal time for the future of the youth vote in a moment the political consciousness and engagement that really cannot be overlooked. And must be resourced robustly.

So with that said, I want to stay -- start this conversation to talk a little bit about the infrastructure that are at the local level in terms of youth civic engagement organization.

So I'm going to get started with Tiffany, but I remember that last year -- almost a year ago there were several youth organizations that gathered for the youth action summit which was hosted by the alliance for youth organizing which included partnerships who were in the steering committee like the NAACP Youth and College Division, NextGen America. Planned Parenthood Generation, their generation division, Student Power Network and United We Dream.

These are organizations that are advancing high impact civic engagement programs and really are gathering to connect, build, strategize and amplify their work. We had a conversation around exploring what it would look like to have a shared space for the youth civic engagement sector where they could sort of have a space to learn from each other, to coordinate, to come into alignment. But also to share with the philanthropic and organizational partners what the depth and expansion of the space looks like.

Tiffany, I want to get started with you. You are part of that very first conversation that we had and then also joined us when we did a briefing in November. So if you can just please share some of your insights in regards to how you see the youth civic engagement intra+ structure at the national level and what opportunities are there and then we can dive right into the role specifically of the NAACP Youth and College Division in that space.

>> **TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN:** Sure. Thank you. I had to take notes even though we have notes on the Google Doc.

I want to start probably with helping y'all understand the infrastructure. There are waves of the youth movement. I have been in the youth movement in the last 12 years at the national level. There are waves of bodies of folks that existed. A lot of us are still here doing the same work and supporting the new generation of people who are leading, the executive directors or lead staff of non-profit youth of color organizations.

We each have an organization called Generational Alliance, which was a collection of organization and executive directors that supported and led all of the national work by giving voices, resources and space to people on the ground. That no longer exists. I think that sort of ended around 2013-14, I want to say. And since then there have been multiple reiterations of what that has looked like.

Of course, the YEF space has been super -- it's been a cornerstone in that work in what we made it to do and wanted to do but all of us have the same relationships. Our infrastructure with the NAACP, thank you, are -- it does work. Our infrastructure with the NAACP and what's happened across the country has also shifted.

I used to be the President of the National Student Association. It was called USSA, United States Student Association. I don't know if you are familiar with the labor movement happened across the country. There is an attempted to disorganize structured organizing on the ground. That attack happened on student associations. There used to be 12 of them across the country and there are only three. California, Oregon and Arizona. Arizona re-building.

These. These spaces and infrastructure allowed student voices to have their own autonomy and two create space for their own agency to advocate and fight for what they wanted for.

Students -- like I said in my intro story they wanted to fight against student fees we were able to do that through student government and through a statewide student association this California called the University of California Student Association.

In Wisconsin, there was actually a state statute 36095 students had agency to decide what they wanted to do for their own agenda that has been stricken and united council that the student association has disappeared. Attack on structured organizing.

I join the NAACP in 2018 knowing that at the intersections of young organized chapters and Black people that is exactly where I needed to be. I didn't know pandemic would hit and I would be here doing this job now at this moment as I'm sure none of us did the intersection of that and that structure to infrastructure -- the structured organizing of an infrastructure, I knew there was an opportunity for us to continue to build that and USSA kind of has gone through a dip and is coming back slowly and surely and there are other opportunities and chances to build national networks like that.

There is the Power Student Network. There is Vote Mob. The groups that you are listening to on the panel. And then there is obviously the Black Youth Project and there is movement from Black lives and et cetera. And the NAACP college division has 230 chapter is a cross the country. 230 chapters I work with everybody 25 years and old and younger in the NAACP.

And we have high school, middle school and college chapters in the NAACP in college division. That infrastructure does help with continuity. You know and I know that very well everybody tries to slam youth organizing, it's a high turnover which is factual but sometimes that works to our benefit. Most of the time the it works to our benefit.

We know that not only with the high turnover but also with the vehicles of institutions that exist we allow students to then organize themselves and also turn over their leadership into other -- excuse me, to the incoming class to continue the torch. And that come through didn't government, Black student unions and through the queer student union or women union. Whatever group exists we are able to pass the torch and build leaders who are able to carry on the work.

So the slide you are looking at right now on this screen is an effort like I mentioned earlier for us to uplift the voices of the young people doing work on the ground and are passing the torch.

So the New York Times, ABC, Scottsdale Progress, CNN, we had students that were able to share their platform in the work they were doing with not only the organizing that they had but the -- in an effort to push an agenda on the local and statewide level. This is important. A lot of times you will see adults or see commentators on the news.

My job is to make sure that you can listen to the people who might not have as many followers on Instagram, who might not have had the proper media training or a law degree, but actually on the ground doing the real work and who you need to hear from because they are the credible and legitimate source. Those are our highlights. This is a month ago so there is some more that we have.

We -- this picture that you are looking at of this young lady. She is the first Black President at University of Minneapolis -- or Minnesota. After the murder of George Floyd she wrote a letter to her chancellor demanding that the school cut the contract with the off campus P.D. In less than 12 hours her chancellor responded and said okay. Didn't happen just because she wrote a letter.

It happened because they had organizing work before that, so we included her in training that we wanted to do for campuses across the country. I put out a post on my social media, my personal social media and there were over 230 schools that reached out and they include counselors, high school students, school board representatives, student leader and organizers of the NAACP folks who said, hey, we want to be able to find out how they did that and replicate and do the same thing.

Since then, letters and petitions that have come out from these schools that list of schools to not only replicate what she has done and expand it with an eight can't wait campaign. We won't kick you off campus but we will hold you to hold you, to defund you and make sure our communities and schools are safe.

This is a map of the Black civic seminar I mentioned earlier. Again, our civic engagement work has had to be digital. We have national partnership with Vote.org. They gave us our own personalized link. We have a national partnership with them so we are sharing the link, the link to do two things and do it from Vote.org. You can register to vote at Vote.org and check your status. Your registration benefit Vote.org and file for your absentee ballot pending where you live because regulations -- I'm a person that elections should be universal but we aren't there yet. I'm ahead of my time.

Vote.org allows people to do things according to their state and thinkings, a map of the folks that we were able to engage and train who are now going to organize come next Friday, Black voter day where our folks are getting T-shirts and door hangers and window signs and face masks and hand sanitizer and stickers and posters and will be sharing and making a bigger presence and splash in their community.

These are the folks with ehave from the NAACP side and volunteers to coordinate those efforts and partnered with elected officials, student actors, celebrities that you can see on the left-hand side that are organizing their own conversations.

And two more minutes. So the last thing I will say is on this slide is this.

In terms of leadership development and civic engagement works, one of the tidbits I will give you all for free is the messenger matters. I was organizing in Tallahassee where we flew -- not we I wasn't the person, I didn't have money. But Oprah and all of these celebrities, they came to have a giant rally for elections. Encouraging people to turn out to vote the next morning.

The next morning we were at the precinct in Florida and not only was it empty, nobody was there to vote all day. But also -- or not nobody, but very, very low turnout. But also Tallahassee which this is non-partisan and I'm non-partisan for your understanding, Tallahassee which was ran by the mayor who is running for governor, Tallahassee went red. And also the state of Florida went red.

So we found that like when we tried to use celebrities, it doesn't always work, especially if they are flying in from outside places. You can't just fly people all over the country to random places. That's not how it works.

So the mechanism that NAACP and college division uses we have our own members and own leaders and our own organizers and every city across the country and they are the best messengers. These pictures are my young people for the first time ever doing a national conversation -- a statewide or local conversation around the issues that matter most to them.

We have our folks who are in Georgia who organizes around Georgia issues. We don't need California people to come talk to Georgia. We don't need our folks in Louisville, Kentucky, hearing from folks from Florida. Florida got their own issues and Kentucky got their own issues. The idea of building capacity which takes time is we have to invest in the leaders that are currently there because those are the folks that live there.

If we have folks that come from outside the county and from all over the place to do that work, they don't leave the infrastructure and folks can't do the work on their own and we are all about and I speak to all of my colleagues on the panel, we are all about making sure that our folks have their own power, own agencies to move their own agenda.

I think that's it. Yup, that's my last slide. Thank you all so much. I will take questions afterwards.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you so much, Tiffany. Yes, we are going to be stepping into Q&A and more of an interactive discussion right after this set of presentations so please write down any questions you have or information that you want to share for us to bring into the space.

Next we will move back into Arizona. So Montse will share with us about the work that is happening there. This one feels particularly bitter sweet because a lot of these collaborative efforts at the state and national level that YEF was supporting we were envisioning they would start in March. And then that obviously did not turn out that way but we are looking forward to continuing to supporting local youth infrastructure and in Arizona, Georgia, Florida and at the national level.

So Montse, if you could walk us through what is happening with the youth power coalition and what the work it's looking like over -- work is looking like over the next few months.

>> **MONTSE ARREDONDO:** Thank you so much. And we just started to re-imagine -- it used to be called student vote coalition, but we really wanted to also emphasize that young people in these organizations aren't just students that are doing engagement work.

They are organizing all year-round. Empowering youth, filling up city council meeting and school board meetings and participating in their college or high school governing experiences and also doing that at their organization level.

Since this year, just this year, we re-imagined it and it's called Arizona Youth Power Coalition. We were partners unite to empower, and engage youth to be change makers in Arizona and leaders in our communities. So to break that into a space to continue to grow the space, I feel like I come from this as well.

I started again in 2010 freshman year of college -- well, shifting from high school to college, and still in this and now leading -- in the state of Arizona. It goes to show.

And that's my dog. He snores so loud. And I want to not know what to do. If I can kick him out he will start crying. I apologize. I think he will be better.

And a young leader that has continued in this work. This is some of the partners that are a part of the youth power coalition. Some are official winners and others are just a part of this breakout or working group. Some groups like ASA are solely are very much stress focused on student and student work while students like Bullet In Action, Fuente, and Lucha are doing immigrant people organizing and youth organization.

Just highlights here from this slide that I wanted to share. This year the Puente have been able to do huge shift at the Phoenix level around policing and keeping police accountable as well as the city around resources for reallocating resources and are pushing to be a part of a citizen review board that they have really pushed.

And I said this in an interview not long ago. The success in cities and it's happening really quickly in a way that it didn't happen for us in 2010 like we did voter registration and governor Brewer was still elected. That was a huge reality hit. Change takes a long time. Like this is a long run and we are still in it and these young people -- well, and very much from ACE as well have been doing and pushing their high school districts, the city for a long time.

So when the marches here locally they happen after George Floyd, we saw -- things start to pick up quicker. But it's because folks were able to find a space, an existing

space. So BLM was already super active. So there was a place for new organizers, new energy to be caught and that was possible because these organizations were already supported. They are a part of this network and more and more continue to show their worth even if they are not necessarily the big players when it comes to door knocking or mailing on and around.

So again, that's something we are trying to emphasize that this is the energy and the breadth that organizations like youth advocacy organizations bring to the overall coalition work overall turnout work is humongous.

And also share in 2018 we did -- and what we come together and do as a coalition is civic engagement work that and looks like voter registration, census, DOTV this year so we have a huge census effort and voter registration and we had to shift. In 2018 we did 191,000 voter registrations. 46% of which were of people under 35. And that is because our organizations are so young. Our canvassers are so young so they are attracting people that are young, too.

And this year we were able to do 35,000 voter registrations from January to March. But had to shift to on-line work. So if you move to the next slide, you will kind of see how we shifted, how we are getting creative to continue to meet folks where they are at. I don't want us to give all of our resources to Facebook. Buying digital ads. And we are trying to figure out how to and keep investing in our communities.

We were fortunate enough after March when we shut down to keep all of our organizers and canvassers on staff by switching them over to phone banking and text banking. So you can see a little drift of a phonebank -- a text bank we had together sending out thousands of texts and posts on-line about the voting around the presidential preference election, I believe this one was because in Arizona it is close to parties. So you have to update to participate in that. And then we had ACE on the other side doing a drive through event. I don't know how well folks can see that slide. But it was -- it worked really great. We had different tents and really secure locations to have folks come and be able to register in person.

Arizona has had on-line voter registration for a long time. We were one of the first. But it's so outdated. We haven't changed it since we put it up and you can register on a physical form without a driver's license with your -- we have to be matched. Don't get me wrong. You might not make it on the rolls, but you can try to register.

And when you go online you can't and we were able to having folks that don't have a traditional address like our native community who hadn't been able to register online now can. It's chunky and still fixing it and that's just as of ten days ago and the voter registration deadline is October 6 and we are in the middle of September. Now can register with a non-traditional address.

We are trying to pressure our local government that things need to change ASAP so

folks can vote this year that everything in our life has changed except for our election timeline. And then another neat thing that reminds me of that is that we are commissioning with artists across the state.

This is in San Carlos, Arizona, the reservation up north, to do murals and visual art. Folks are still working and folks are still driving around so we are putting up art work. Putting up street signs to remind folks of their power, their ability to vote. Just trying to get creative and trying to connect with folks in person. It's really hard to do the digital work. It's a grind.

And it's easy to walk away from an ad in ways that it's not easy to walk away from me trying to register you at the grocery store. We are trying to mend that by doing some different activities.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you so much. And thank you so much for sharing the work that has advanced this year even amidst the pandemic to formalizing the Arizona Youth Power Coalition. YEF is super committed to supporting the coalitions and collaboratives forming at the state level. And anyone who is interested in learning more about that, we are happy to engage in those conversations as well.

So we are going to go ahead and to the last presentation before we take questions and go back to Georgia. I remember as I shared earlier when I first met you, Michelle, I was really excited when you were like, yeah, there are 65 of us in this group chat of all young people who are doing civic engagement in Georgia.

So I think if you can speak a little bit to the opportunities that you see on supporting infrastructure through leadership and for youth who are able to advance more solidify civic engagement efforts for the long run Georgia and -- long run in Georgia and what are the work that Women Engaged is doing to make that happen.

>> **MICHELLE WILSON:** What life was like before the pandemic. Let's take a trip.

As far as like looking at what our community outreach strategy was like before hand, we do a mixture -- we talked about -- because of 2020, but we do in-person election protection and also go to different areas that we frequented most.

One of the biggest places that invested in our community is by listening. That middle picture there is the east point farmers market which is a small suburb outside of Atlanta and we were actually invited there by somebody who was on our team and I think it's really again important about bringing people in to where we are going to their communities and giving them the tools to have those conversations with their neighbor.

And really rooting it there in community and with young people because the reality is that to my point previously when things are transactional especially for young people there is a tendency to bring young people in and you are just regulated to social media or these things are in the background and bringing them in real leadership roles where you can see things that are happening and how they are directly impacting it is very crucial to that.

And that's kind of framing to my next slide where I talk more about the darker side of Georgia in terms of our infamous voter suppression. This picture is actually taken from 2018 during that very major election between Stacey Abrams and Brian Kemp.

One of the precincts and communities we work in where myself and one other organizer were actually tasked with bringing water and snacks to the precincts and they were trying to close three hours early and a huge fight in trying to get them to keep the location open. This is probably one-eighth of what that line looks like.

It wraps around the building like three times inside and it was definitely a very interesting night but for us and our organization we see a direct tie to the tactics that are used to suppress and deny the people voting rights to the ways at which the things are moved when it comes to reproductive justice overall is personal autonomy to our own bodies.

That brought us into 2019 where we started doing mobilization efforts so we definitely had an issue around the abortion ban that were going around to Georgia along with the nine other states passed a similar abortion ban and we were able to mobilize young people to bring them into the capitol provide tools on how to lobby their legislators and demystify the process and we started talking about youth civic engagement and focus on the vote but piece about bringing young people into a place that has never really been that open to young people and supporting them in a real way.

So that means that making sure that we are getting people food. Knowing that because of the way that wages are situated people are taking their time to come out here they need to be supported in that way because the idea is that you had to take off work to go to the capitol and you were working and that something that needs to happen.

These are our young people who were doing demonstration up in the gallery during the first hearing on the floor for the abortion ban. So really being able to mobilize in the efforts to support young people in particular and making sure that we are not only doing some of the work as far as outreach in the ways that people have seen us. Also that we are in the forefront and we are visible and that we are being taken seriously and it's a very real way.

And so I think again though we look at the very macro level of things and 2020 is a

huge year because of the federal position this was a huge time for the state level, but really it starts at the heart of local community.

So what we have here is a picture on the left. I will say our canvas team is comprised of mostly like about 80% young people. People under the age of 35. And we were actually able to host a candidate forum. We host candidate forums for college park to small cities outside of Atlanta. Each municipal cycle they have.

And this past we did a number of people didn't even know that they had an election coming up in that area until we text them about a candidate forum we were hosting. And in conjunction with that we were able to do some door knocking around the census and just provide that same type of conversation because reality is that while we are having the conversation with people about voting and stuff, it should always be tied back to how we get them involved. About the things that really matter most of them who were able to have a great deal of engagement here because at the core of this is about voter education and voter outreach. That goes beyond that at the ballot box.

Here are some of my favorite pictures of folks is that it starts at bus stations and starts by having the conversations with people and getting them to take the first step. I think a lot of times there is a lot of work about trying to spread out in the ways we are doing things where we really need is a deeper investment in cultivating relationships with the people that we know.

Because Tiffany brought this up before is that it's about the messenger and not necessarily the notoriety of the person that is actually saying the message. That's where we are at. It's about making sure we have folks talking to their communities and talking to their best friends and their families about things that are beyond the headlines to really have this conversation so I want to bring it in -- and talk about the narrative and I want to talk about the quantitative and talk about our voter turnout comparison.

In 2015 and 2019 with the municipal elections and in 2019 we had a historic gubernatorial election where we had four Black women running for four of the highest positions in the state. And of course in 2016 was very much familiar with that. And in 2017 Atlanta had a municipal election.

What we see here actually in the diagram is that when we talk to people over and over again and cultivate relationships they turn out to vote much higher than those that we don't talk to compared to local averages. So what we see is that we actually need to have a much deeper connection with people that extends beyond major election years.

That is what we are talking about under horizon that is coming up is the November election but also how we will continue this amount of support beyond November's

election. Make sure that we are not only creating connections this year but that we are sustaining these connections and in a very sustainable way and we are adequately supporting young people and the turnover rate can decrease because oftentimes people discount the struggles that young people are facing when it comes to being wholly present but the reality is that tuition is at an all-time high. Wages have not increased. There are housing issues as far as being able to find -- secured housing in areas that we need to be in and so it's really important that we invest in folks in that way.

Here in Atlanta we actually have municipal a large number of municipal elections occurring in a number of areas next year. We are also preparing for the possibility of a run-off election. For the past couple of years in Georgia there have been run-off elections since at least since we have been in municipal in Atlanta we did one in 2018 because while there was a lot of conversation around the Brian Kemp versus Stacey Abrams, the Secretary of States position went to a run-off. We continued to do that voter outreach then and we are preparing for that this year as well.

With the census wrapping up at the end of this month, we are also looking to talk about restricting. Our legislative session starts at the top of the year and the biggest thing that hurts our vote is How they draw maps in favor of one party over another.

And so with that, my biggest takeaway here is that when we invest in community, community shows out. And community is able to actualize and say what they need to say. It's really important that we continue to invest in folks in this way. That we sustain this beyond high stake elections.

And that we are as we support young people in a way that they need to be supported so that way we can fully show up and fully participate, it's all aspect of civic engagement when it comes to voting and beyond.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you for sharing and Tiffany and Montse for your presentations and bringing us along in your journey and your work. Yeah, I think I just really want to emphasize what everyone has shared.

You know, I know a lot of us are focused on what's going to happen over the next few weeks and that's really important and it's already underway as you have heard from all of the speakers, we are also stepping into a new decade. And I want to emphasize that power building and transformational change that is going to last through generations takes time.
And takes adequate funding.

I think about even when we think about Arizona and Georgia now becoming battle ground states, that didn't happen overnight and it didn't start in 2018 with the mid-term elections. It was at least a ten year long investment of the development of

the young people that are now running these organizations and these campaigns. And building of the infrastructure to be able to sustain that work over the long run.

So I want to go ahead and move into the first question that we have here. So there is a super appreciation of the emphasis of youth leadership development which is key strategy to be able to advance the work. And I'm going to post this one to you, Tiffany. We shared several spaces together and you also been part of a lot of cross movement building and leadership development spaces.

So it says, what have you seen as key ingredients in supporting leaders and leadership development as a core power building strategy.

>> **TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN:** I'm in D.C. and we got the Ambler a-- Amber Alert. It was really loud. Sorry.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** If you need to step away let us know.

>> **TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN:** Go ahead.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Safety first. The question is, what have you seen as the key ingredient in supporting leaders and leadership development as a core power building strategy?

>> **TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN:** Thank you for the question. By nature of the question I am going to assume we all agree that leadership development is the core part of the power building strategy. I'm not even going to talk about that.

But the key elements and other folks can chime in on the panel that I see are really multi-faceted. We do a whole three day training on leadership development and then comprise that into a two minute answer.

The first in my experience is you got to make sure that the relationship that we have with leadership development are not transactional but transformational. Every single person in my staff team is someone I know personally. And I know that there are management center ideas around getting too close to your colleagues and et cetera.

What I mean by getting to them personally is I know for example that I have a young student right now who for the first time ever is in her first relationship with somebody who is the same sex as her. Same sex relationship. And it's her first time ever being in a same-sex relationship. She is also writing a report to the NAACP on police brutality.

She is also the President of the NAACP chapter. She is also a senior right now trying to graduate in May but she also has a mother who is in the hospital because of COVID and so she is trying to navigate all of these things.

Sorry, I got the notification again. I'm fine. I'm in the house but the rain is really bad.

And so here is what I mean by development. Because I know all of those things about this young woman and I didn't just ask her, are you gay? How is your mom. What school do you go to, it happens through relationships. And because I know these things about them, I know now that there are certain things that I can ask them to do and there are things I can't ask them to do.

Relationship-wise for the work. I'm not going to ask them to organize a March for March for our lives or for the March on Washington. I'm not going to ask them to write a press release. I'm not going to ask them to go live with me on Instagram and they are occupied. My priorities are to make sure they graduate. We had a check up call at the nail salon and I said tell me all of the big things you are working on and put them in priority. And my relationship, my family, my school and NAACP.

I said cool, now break it down by percentages. They broke it down by percentages and school only got like 15 to 17% out of 100. And I said to them, well, isn't school like you're graduating your number one priority. Why does it have the lowest percentage of your time and energy? We operate as organizers and national leaders but sometimes we are their big sister or big brother and sometimes their coach or mentor, et cetera.

And so leadership development I'm going through to make sure that I understand what they are going through and how I can navigate the leadership development but know what they care about. I know this person really deeply cares about the COVID health pandemic and schools re-opening and closing because their mother is in the hospital. And I'm going to direct them to that work. I'm not going to ask them to do work for immigration because that's not what they are focused on right now. I know them.

And I said this earlier and we all said it, that level of engagement is the most evidence-based successful way of leadership development ever. I got into my job not because I saw a job announcement on LinkedIn. I got into this work because unfortunately violence chose me and I was trying to figure out how to fix it. And somebody found me and said, hey, you can send this post card that can go to Congress and get money to the Department of Education and get money for the state to not raise your tuition any more did. You know there is an opportunity to fight for ethnic studies at our school.

Because there were solutions offered to me, I felt empowered to engage and connect with those people to then fight for that longer term. And then I won three elections at

my college and then I graduated and I was elected nationally for the United States student association to be the Vice-President uncontested. I didn't know I would be a national organizer. I didn't know this was a job. But because there -- and I didn't know I could get paid for it.

Because there are people who -- and Black women specifically, I will be transparent about this. Because there are Black women specifically who found me and said, we see you, we hear you, we know that you want to make a difference. Try these things. And it is a skill set that you might not learn in school and sometimes you can't just learn from a job. But you learn from real hands on experiences.

So I have a list of 300 young people that I am tracking through the leadership development pipeline. We have a staff team and we assign who will talk to her so we can build stronger relationships with those. Unless we have the infrastructure of the staff to focus on field work, unless we have the infrastructure of staff to focus on building young leaders, we aren't going to be successful.

I know that the popular thing to do -- it was interesting to see the poll and less than 25% of y'all's budget goes to young people of color. That's alarming to me because if your budget goes to -- then you aren't building the capacity on the ground. If it goes to research and it's mostly research, that's great.

But how are you checking that with the folks that can be the next group of researchers for the work we want to do. And the only way we are able to do that is not through Zoom. Not through Instagram live, not through a link they have to fill out in a survey but actual relationship building that is possible even though we have to socially distance. I hope that answered the question. That was a great one.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** I think that I don't know how much more we can emphasize the importance of relationship. I mean, I think all of us here on the panel, this is why -- this is how we came into this work and how we are able to continue as we've grown, in our different roles of leadership and this work. It's essentially because we have each other's back. And that's the kind of culture and environment that is going to allow for the work to move forward.

So with that I'm going to move on to one more question. It says: I work in a community with a large Latinx community. However, there are literally a presentation of Latinx in positions of power in different organizations. What are some suggestions to share to help increase the representation and participation.

So I'm going to move that one -- that question to you, Montse. I know a large of the leaders in the population that you work with are Latinx. So if you can speak to how you see that play out.

>> **MONTSERRAT ARREDONDO:** Yeah. Yeah, for sure. I think that we are still fighting to see better representation at our government level. But we have done a better job.

Our organizational level and so things that have worked really nicely for us is co-directorships and supporting that. Deputy directorships and supporting that. Those are some of the ways that we worked to fit in roles to have a space to learn from folks that have been in the work for longer. And then put it in a way that that -- the -- I understand that, I can get behind that.

So I guess labeling it is a way to the money rules. But those are the things that have helped us. And it is still a learning space so being mindful of that. If someone is coming into deputy directorships and they are there to learn from the executive director. That they are in many ways shadowing and adapting and learning and that the expectations of them aren't to keep doing what they are already doing before. They have a different title.

So I think that's a hiccup or that's something that we still need to be better about. That we are putting folks in new roles and actually mentoring them and they are learning what that next level is.

And we have a hard time with that because we were in the middle of elections. And there are fires putting out during the legislative session or the pandemic starts so we have to figure out how to go from in-person to on-line.

So I will say even as groups that are -- we were not in it for us and we came to this work because we were in other work and we are all moving and climbing the ladder in a sense. Still need to pass the knowledge and continue to work for each other. I say don't forget that piece or make sure that's embedded.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you, Montse. We have one more question but I wanted to just sort of piggy back off of what Montse said.

In March, YEF had conversations with all of our movement partners and really the conversation was to check in on how they were. Are you safe? Is your family safe? Do you have what you need?

And one of the things that we realized particularly for executive directors who are mostly women of color, young people, there is a huge need for coaching executive support which is not often part of the budgets of the organization. In a year like this, having the ability to troubleshoot with someone who can support you that might be outside of your team is crucial.

So with YEF, one of the things we are advancing by the end of the year is that we will be moving forward multi-year Black Indigenous youth of color cohort. We are hoping

to have 10 to 15 groups over the course of two years so we can support with grants, with major grants and also capacity building training, executive coaching. And also working with our research partner circle to be able to evaluate and sort of document the work over the course of the two years. If anyone is interested in learning more about that, please do reach out and with that I'm going to move on to the last question.

Which is around: With so many campuses shut down what are the best strategies you are finding to reach and engage college students in this work? Michelle, do you want to take this one?

>> **MICHELLE WILSON:** Yes, thank you. I will say right now it's really -- we have been talking about relationships and it's really a who knows who. I will say because we directly hire students, it's about asking them who they know. But also someone else that you can also tap are professors.

Now that we are in a very virtual space, actually much easier to get a captured audience by just talking to professorships. I think overall this pandemic is teaching us is that a lot of the stuff that we did like -- you can go to an official person with the campus and would have to have these conversations and stuff like that that is now looking at a much more relaxed, much more personable interaction as far as how to get in because right now the thing is that we are dealing with a crisis of upon crisis upon crisis.

A number of educators in college and also in high school are overwhelmed and are actually looking for opportunities for people to come in and talk with their students for them even if that's very helpful so you can actually incorporate that into some of that as well as make things that are leading with the times. And when we do have those conversations with students, too, and making sure that we are in a space that we kind of let go of this need for perfection.

So I think is sometimes a little off-putting. The reality is we are not talking to people my age and younger, like I may not sound as put together to some extent or using a little bit more relaxed language so key and crucial because the thing is that we talked about this is that people want to know that you are human. People want to know that we are human. And right now people are really valuing connection right now.

So I think that when it comes to new ways, it's about a who knows who. Really reaching out to the professors now because everybody is on Zoom and have a smaller spaces. And also just reaching out to the young people that you already connected in. And bringing up, too. What I'm doing in this part is that it's not a me coming into a classroom. It's like, hey, I'm reaching out to students and they are a part of leading this conversation with their flow.

>> **ALEJANDRA RUIZ:** Thank you, Michelle. All righty, we have five minutes left. I feel like every time we have these conversations it's never enough time even though we already have been chatting for almost two hours. We did have another jam board activity for you all on learnings and reflections. We are cutting it a little close to time. So what we are going to do is you will see the link again on the chat for learning and reflection. Same idea as last time with two questions.

The first question is -- well, you will see the two questions there and if you can just take your own time to fill that out. I'm going to stay on for an extra five minutes if anybody wants to do that.

And we also do have another poll so we are going to -- I think, going to do the poll now. Since that one is attached to Zoom. So whenever you are ready. I think the poll went away.

So the first question on the poll is do you have a better understanding of the role of youth of color leading civic engagement work. Yes or no.

The second question is do you feel like you can go back to your colleagues and talk about what it could look like for your institution to support youth of color-led organizing and civic engagement?

The third question is, by what percentage do you think your institution should increase their giving from what you currently give to youth of color-led work? Are you super motivated and re-energized by the leadership of this amazing young women of color panel and will think of them, their work and vision in your roles moving forward?

So we will give a few minutes for you to answer those questions. I actually, as you do that, I also am going to post a quote here on the chat. Sort of as an invitation. And the reminder that that, you know, for the importance of this work, during the 2018 mid-term elections we did see youth voter turnout spike to 100 year high.

But I think what has been made clear is that this is not just about being election years and doing the work during that time. This is about year-round organizing and it's about in-depth leadership development of individual leaders supporting the infrastructure, the scaling and growth of organizations. And also of collaborations and state level work that is going to help amplify the voices and the efforts of the work is that happening on the ground.

And here on the chat I had put just sort of a brief story from supporters when we are all here as philanthropic partners and what I want to invite you into is to really step up your leadership. How can we move those numbers to be higher and more in alignment with the belief -- believe of young people of color will play a huge role in transforming our democracy.

And the chat here says that in 1964, the singer Harry Belafonte and Sidney Portier they went to raise money to make sure that the freedom summer school kept going. And they knew they were at risk. This goes back to what Tiffany was talking about. Imagine the severity of the situation for people to put their physical life at risk. And this is happening for a long time.

So I want to invite you all to leap in and take that risk within your institutions and within your roles. To continue to support this work. So I'm going to share here.

Do you have a better understanding. 100% yes. Do you feel like you can go back to your colleagues, most of you said heck yes. Some of you need more support. For those that need more support you will see the slide here. And you will see the information for the three panelists that spoke. And you can reach out to any of them directly.

You can also reach out to me and I'm happy to share with you about the work that we are doing at YEF and I'm happy to connect you with other groups. We work mostly in the south and southwest. So there are other partner organizations that are not present here that are doing very similar and active work to what you all heard about today.

And I think with that, we will wrap it up. And again thank you all so much for joining us in this afternoon. Thank you, Tiffany, Michelle and Montse. I know you are always very active and busy so I do super appreciate you all sharing your wisdom and your energy to activate us, not just for the rest of this year but for the long run.

And thank you NFG and congratulations on 40 years.
