

Public Narrative underlying the We The People Michigan Pedagogy, and its use in the Drive Michigan Forward Coalition

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ABSTRACT

Public narrative is a leadership practice being learned and practiced across different contexts worldwide. Specific cases shed light on how public narrative is being practiced at the grassroots level in situations that are often more conducive to developing agency. In this study we explore how public narrative can be used for team formation in the framework of leadership and community organizing. We deepen in how We the People Michigan, an organization engaged in community organizing, has used public narrative in its leading role convening the Drive Michigan Forward coalition. Findings point at the role of public narrative in enhancing two aspects that were of utmost importance for team formation and effective group working. First, sharing personal stories as a way to get to know and discover each other, and find a common base. Second, moving from each organization specific needs to focus on the urgency of tackling their constituencies needs, that of the undocumented migrants in Michigan.

KEYWORDS

public narratives, leadership, migrants, team, organizing, community

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The first thing that I'll do when I get my license is go to the beach, no matter what part of the year it is. I have a beach towel on my wall, and I look at it every day. Even if I go to the beach and look at blocks of ice, I know that we'll get there.

”

(Nelly from WTP MI).



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan website

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents and discusses the main findings of the case study on “We the People Michigan ” organization and further on the “Drive Michigan Forward Campaign ”, led by the coalition of the same name, the Drive Michigan Forward Coalition.

This case study started as part of the Narratives4Change project back in September 2019. The Narratives4Change project aimed at studying how the public narrative framework is being used for the development of individual and collective leadership in different areas of action (e.g.: advocacy/organizing in education, health, politics, etc.) and cultural and geographical contexts, to better understand how it enables individuals’ agentic action and their capacity to develop agency in others, enhancing organizational capacity. Doing this will eventually inform a twofold objective. First, to better understand how the use of public narrative impacts individuals’ interpersonal relationships by means of enabling agency. And second, to explore how it impacts creating new social realities. Drawing on the results obtained in the research phase at the HKS, that is, on the larger analysis of the public narrative framework, the project seeks to contribute with novel knowledge on how public narrative can be adapted to the European context, and specifically, helping grassroots Roma women associations in their own organizing.

While the case was unfolding, suddenly the COVID19 pandemic emerged, and changed the social reality we were all living in. This changed the course of our lives, and with it, the initial aim of the case. Disruption marked the course of 2020, and also the course of the Drive Michigan Forward campaign, and the work that We The People together with its collaborating organizations were carrying out.

Within the framework of Narratives4Change, the case study focused on research questions which guide this explorative study: **How is WTP using Public Narrative for the development of individual and collective leadership in the context of its organizing activities?**

These questions about the type of organizing that We The People Michigan is leading and articulating have been explored by looking specifically at the case of one campaign on which the organization has contributed to convene, and on which it has taken the lead, **the Drive Michigan Forward campaign.**

In this sense, this case is not an in-depth study of the We The People MI organization nor of the Driving Michigan Forward campaign. Rather, **it poses questions and answers solely some of them, about how an organization that emerged less than 10 years ago (We The People MI) can work in a way that allows creating the organizational architecture, that is, the structure and the meaning,** through its people. And linked to this, how it has been able **to put in the debate agenda a topic that had been for more than a decade tackled as a sided issue by public authorities, that of the driving licenses,** but which is negatively impacting the lives of thousands of undocumented migrants in Michigan.

After hours of fieldwork conducted in 2019 and 2020, it felt that all the work that had been carried out could no longer remain unexplained; instead, the reality that many Michiganders are shaping needed to be told.

WHAT IS PUBLIC NARRATIVE AND WHY TO STUDY IT IN LIGHT OF THE WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY WE THE PEOPLE MI?

Public narrative is a way of linking the power of narrative to the work of leadership by learning to tell a story. Harvard Professor Marshall Ganz and his collaborators began developing a pedagogy of public narrative for more than 15 years at the Harvard Kennedy School. It consists of articulating and linking three elements: a story of why I have been called, a **story of self**; a story of why we have been called, a **story of us**; and a story of the urgent challenge on which we are called to act, a **story of now**. As Ganz himself explains, this articulation of the relationship of self, other and action is also at the core of our moral traditions (Ganz, 2010). In this regard, leadership became essential for enabling others to achieve a shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty (Ganz, 2010).

Narrative is grounded in specific story moments in which a protagonist is confronted with a disruption for which s/he is not prepared, the choice s/he makes in response, and the resulting outcome. Because we can identify empathetically with the protagonist, we experience the emotional content of the moment, the values on which the protagonist draws to respond. The “moral” of the story we learn, then, is in this emotional experience, a “lesson of the heart” rather than only a cognitive “lesson of the head.” We can thus call on this experience as a “moral resource” when we must face disruptions endemic to the human experience (Aiello & Ganz, 2021). Consequently, narrative is a way of accessing emotional resources embedded in values to transform threats to which we react fearfully and retreat into challenges to which we can respond hopefully and engage.

Public narrative has been adapted in online and offline courses at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) and in workshops, projects, and campaigns such as the 2008 Obama for President campaign. Between 2006 to 2016, at least 32,184 people participated in 448 workshops in some 25 countries including Denmark, Serbia, Jordan, India, Viet Nam, China, Japan, Australia, and Mexico, and in domains as distinct as health care, education, politics, religion, and advocacy.

Public narrative has been used strategically by both We the People-Michigan and the Drive Michigan Forward coalition to build a strong and meaningful relationship with both the undocumented community in Michigan and Michiganders in general aimed at developing shared purpose. Hence, unpacking how this has occurred will shed light on how this has impacted on the type of leadership led and promoted at the core of We The People MI.

GETTING INSIDE WE THE PEOPLE MICHIGAN: THE CONTEXT AND THE ORGANIZATION

A GLIMPSE ON MICHIGAN

Since the historical Great Migration, Michigan has had a considerable presence of Afro Americans and Hispanics within its population. Moreover, the areas with the highest percentages of non-white individuals are concentrated in urban centers, such as Detroit, Flint, Saginaw, Pontiac and so on (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Nevertheless, concerning racial diversity, Michigan is slightly less diverse in comparison to the national average, although the urban and rural areas reflect the same trend as the national data, which indicates that racial diversity is concentrated in urban areas (Citizens Research Council of Michigan, 2018). Similarly, the population identified as Hispanic, or Latino, is higher in urban centers than in rural areas.

Despite the fact that Michigan has less racial and ethnic diversity in comparison to the whole nation, migration has been a factor that has determined their social, political and economic dynamic. In this sense, it is well known that migration has brought some repercussions associated with education, social welfare programs, crime and public safety, and municipal services (Clay & Price, 1979) which led to deep economic and racial disparities in Michigan.

According to the founding Executive Director of We The People Michigan (hereinafter, WTP-MI), Art Reyes, the organization was an important vehicle that was deeply needed in Michigan due to the fact that it has been considered one of the most important electoral states in the United States. In this regard, several organizations and electoral candidates have targeted Michigan, especially in presidential elections. This way, communities in Michigan have been used as instruments for elections. Michigan has received external revenue for short periods of time around the election, allowing them to build temporary electoral mobilization capacity in contrast to deep organizing capacity pursuit by some organizations, among them WTP-MI.

Reyes explained that the organization has been working in building leadership and organizing infrastructure that is rooted first in people and at the same time, seeing elections for wielding their power as one tool to begin organizing and building power between communities. In this sense, regarding ephemeral mobilizing capacity around elections, the head of WTP-MI made clear that sometimes funders focused on big and expensive programs but they were not durable due to the fact that the power was not in the right hands. Hence, the goal was winning the election instead of building power for Michiganders. As a result, skepticism and lack of trust between the community, organizations and public institutions has increased. On the one hand, the community has seen that, historically, external efforts and revenues received by organizations were temporary around elections, so the community's voice was not prioritized and was not well represented. In addition, some organizations took advantage of the community's needs to raise funds but without taking into account their real struggles, desires and hopes. On the other hand, a perception of mistrust, misunderstanding and lack of solidarity was established among the different actors in Michigan society, resulting in an absence of a shared purpose for the common good.

Another aspect that is crucial to underline is that Michigan is one of the most segregated places in the United States, on account of Detroit having been a destination of Black Americans who were isolated by the government in specific neighborhoods during the Great Migration (Menendian et al., 2021). In this study the authors remark that cities such as Flint and Detroit suffered from deindustrialization and disinvestment for decades, which resulted in bankruptcy and ultimately austerity economic policies have been implemented. For this reason, African Americans Michiganders and migrants have had multigenerational economic devastation, including rural parts, provoking racial segregation and intense levels of economic inequality, creating at the same time a fertile ground for diving conquer politics.

Historically, Michigan has been heavily dependent on manufacturing, particularly in the automobile industry. Therefore, the Michigan economy had fluctuated according to the crisis and recovery of the auto industry. In these terms, Michigan's government, organizations and businesses' leaders initiated programs to expand the state's manufacturing base as well as promoted tourism and education from the public sector. Nonetheless, there are some differences between different regions of Michigan. For instance, the West side of the state is the core of agriculture; due to this, the presence of migrant workers, especially undocumented ones, is significant. Likewise, this vulnerable group of people usually work in greenhouses, meat plants, in the dairy industry, factories and hospitality industry, including restaurants. On the contrary, the southeastern region has been the shelter for the auto industry for years, specifically in Detroit. In this point it is important to clarify that since the contraction of Michigan's auto industry in 2013, as a result of free trade agreements and economic trends worldwide, there have been hardship for many workers. However, Michigan's economy has shown improvements in the last couple of years by dint of the auto industry's expansion into new technologies.

Concerning politics, Michigan is considered a swing state in the sense that Michigan voters tend to elect candidates from both major political parties, that is Democratic and Republican. In contrast, the safe states refer to a base of support for a specific party, either Democratic or Republican. Thus, swing states are targeted by both parties' campaigns during elections. Voters in Michigan know that this is a crucial state due to the fact that candidates need to take advantage of their opponent in these areas.

A GLIMPSE ON "WE THE PEOPLE MICHIGAN" ORGANIZATION

We The People Michigan is a left-of-center-non-profit organization that emerged in July 2018, aimed at organizing for the rights of minority and vulnerable groups across the state of Michigan in the United States. Since its beginning, WTP has been working in explicitly multiracial urban, suburban and rural communities with a racial justice lens, from all corners of the state: from Calumet to Flint, from Detroit to Grand Rapids. To achieve its goal, WTP MI focuses on three main edges: a) build long-term deep organizing infrastructure, b) foster stable, long-lasting alliances and c) be an engine for learning.

THE FLINT-MICHIGAN CRISIS OF WATER IN 2014: NOT A CRISIS OF WATER, BUT A CRISIS OF POWER

The crisis of water in Flint-Michigan in 2014 was the triggering cause for WTP founder to take the lead and persuade others to create the organization.

The Flint water crisis stemmed from reports showing that elevated levels of lead were found in the drinking water of residences in Flint, which led to illnesses such as Legionnaires' disease, miscarriages, behavioral problems in children and male infertility (Masten et al., 2016), affecting trust within the community, the economy of the region as well as the well-being of the community. This situation was the starting point that prepared a fertile ground for leadership, organizing and calling to action in Michigan. The Flint crisis of water is one example of how the rights of certain groups have been violated, provoking in this case serious health issues in residents of Flint and the surrounding communities, especially in the majority-Black community.[1]

[1] Pauli, B. (2020) The Flint Water Crisis: WIREs Water. 2020;7:e1420
https://wires.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/wat2.1420?casa_token=pP_JeaD_oVYAAAAA%3AqXSGYhfem-LWZHax07wF0wVkg1LC4npMncdgHuRavtBAfCxBNeRGNDI8ncUxEIw7bUYQs83L7Ngls

ART'S STORY



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan website

WTP's founder tells how this crisis pushed him in a different direction that allowed him to realize the need of developing organizing skills within the community.

A friend called and told me about an undocumented Latin family who didn't know about the water crisis in Flint because the state hasn't translated anything into Spanish. They tried to get water from one of the official distribution centers that have been set up because they're giving away bottled water. They were requiring the state ID to get bottled water but the undocumented people had their driver's license taken away in 2008. So, they were denied water.

(Art Reyes from WTP-MI, interview).

This crisis made Art Reyes leave his job and moved back to Flint in order to call to action.

We had 80 people from Flint the next day and started canvassing, telling people where they could get water. I thought I was going for the weekend and ended up staying for eight months. We built a massive volunteer operation that was identifying people in neighborhoods. I was building stories, working with a lot of residents directly impacted and that ended up becoming an organization called Flint Rising (Art Reyes from WTP-MI, interview).

In Art's words, the Flint crisis **was not only a water crisis, but a crisis of power**: a political system and governing power that was able to treat a community like that because it is poor and majority black. It was proof that the only way communities like Flint and others were going to be able to have some dignity was if the community began to address the problem themselves, if they began to build enough power. Moreover, it was clear that communities need each other to break down the politics of "conquest and divide" and isolate places like Flint, Detroit or rural areas.

SEEKING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Once WTP-MI was founded, an economic strategy had to be followed to survive as an organization. The approach had to consider that the team had to be deliberate with its founders because there are a set of grantmaking foundations that have an interest in a particular set of issues and therefore use the organizations as intermediaries with the communities. Traditional funder foundations usually maintain a vast control over the agenda, the issue, the strategy, or the tactics used by founded civic organizations. Art Reyes explained that one of the things that has been important in the constitution of WTP-MI is to recognize and acknowledge **that a sustainable social movement infrastructure will not be created if the power remains in the hands of those who have the financial resources to decide the agenda and the type of role that civic organizations can play in politics**. Therefore, it is crucial to understand in whose hands the power is, in order not to assume the communities as instruments, but to look for the communities to use the financial resources as instruments in the power building project. Art mentioned another reason why it is a challenge to find economic sustenance as social movement organizations:

“

We have to be learners, we have to be constantly learning, like what works, what doesn't work, how to improve (...) if we are not sharp in our ability to learn we are dying as an organization. We will never get to create the kind of change we need, because we have to learn. We were very explicit with our funders that their money is our resource. So we are not a supplier.

”

(Art Reyes from WTP-MI, interview).

SEEDING THE GROUND FOR A DIFFERENT ORGANIZING ECOSYSTEM THROUGH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING METHODOLOGY

In these terms the core part of WTP-MI is based on being a fair player in the organizing ecosystem, which means they also leverage the relationships they have to help other organizations get funding, even if that means losing grants. In this way, they make sure that their competitors are not the other organizations with which they are organizing:

We have to keep up with them by learning from them. Win with them, create a space that they can learn from. That is the orientation we have to have. We are going to build a strong, united front that can really move forward in terms of dignity for the communities, without seeing them as our competitors.

(Art Reyes from WTP-MI, interview).

Thus, WTP-MI is rooted and implements the five basic organizing leadership practices, developed by Marshall Ganz: telling stories, building relationships, structuring teams, strategizing, and acting.

WTP targets not only elections but also local and regional issues which impact the community. To this end, they facilitate space for dialogue between diverse communities. WTP-MI developed rigorous and disciplined organizing around political education, storytelling, power mapping, racial healing, cultural organizing and strong alliance building (We the People, 2021).

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



In terms of organizational infrastructure, there are **six teams that operate across the organization with different functions**: the organizing team, the rural organizing team in which the deep canvassing team is embedded, the communication team, the policy and research team, the learning team, and the operations team. WTP-MI is led by an executive director and a deputy director.

In addition, there are five sub-area directors, five specific programme coordinators, nine organizers focusing on different areas of the state of Michigan, a data manager, a data associate, a policy & research fellow and a cultural strategist.

THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study is one of the three in-depth case studies conducted in the framework of the broad Narratives4Change research project (2019-2021). The purpose of these case studies is to analyze initiatives that have used public narrative and to what extent it helped to develop leadership and enhance the agency of those most vulnerable communities.

COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Narratives4Change research project has been developed under the communicative methodological approach (Gomez, Puigvert & Flecha, 2011). The basis of the communicative approach is the dialogic relation between both the researcher and the social actors or researched subject, the former contributing the knowledge from the scientific community, and the latter with their interpretations from the common sense of their lifeworlds (Habermas, 1984).

In the Narratives4Change project the protagonists of the campaign and those collaborating with the organization which is being studied have been involved throughout the research process, since its design at the time of framing the research questions, guiding the process of data collection, as well as at the time of interpreting data. Key actors from WTP-MI team, as well as from the Drive Michigan Forward coalition have been open to share insights, think and rethink over the issues posed, and also challenge or suggest nuances to the interpretations of the data initially done by myself. This has been an inter-subjective process of knowledge elaboration and peer learning, and the use of the communicative approach has provided the methodological lenses to be able to grasp those sites of agentic action in very specific situations which other methodological approaches have tended to overlook or mislook.

STUDY SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

This case study was guided by the following research question:

How is WTP-MI using public narrative for the development of individual and collective leadership in the context of its organizing activities?

DATA COLLECTION

Data has been collected from different sources. Qualitative online fieldwork was carried out between 2019 and 2020 with members of the WTP-MI and the DMF coalition which led the, previously selected according to the role and type of profile: First, members of WTP-MI. In this sense, six in depth-interviews with members who play different roles at WTP-MI and who have been involved at different moments of the campaign were conducted. These were the executive director, the Michigan immigrant justice coordinator, community organizers, communications director, and the deputy director. Additionally, two focus groups were developed as well with members of the organization.

Second, stakeholders' members of the Drive Michigan Forward coalition were also contacted. Six in depth-interviews were run with organizers of member organizations of the DMF coalition, the MLPP (The Michigan League for Public Policy), MIRC (Michigan Immigrant Rights Center), Action of Greater Lansing, and Cosecha Movement.

Also, participant observations were done in October and November 2020 specifically about WTP-MI training sessions related to the Deep Canvassing Programme, as well as events in which the Drive Michigan Forward campaign was presented.

All the fieldwork was run online due to COVID19. Pseudonyms have been used to refer to all interviewees, except for the case of WTP-MI executive director (Art Reyes) and its Michigan Immigrant Justice coordinator (Nelly Fuentes).

UNPACKING THE COMPLEXITY: THE WAYS IN WHICH STORIES PERMEATES AND SHAPES THE ORGANIZING AND LEADERSHIP

A) THE PROBLEM, THE PRECEDENTS, AND AGREEING TO WORK TOGETHER

1) THE PROBLEM

Since 2008, the state of Michigan has required proof of permanent legal residency to get a driver's license which affect the safety and freedom of undocumented people. Prior to this date, there were no requirements for a driver's license in Michigan law other than sufficient documents to prove the driver's identity as well as to show that the person was a resident of Michigan, allowing undocumented immigrants to preserve their integrity and dignity. However, in December 2007 Attorney General Mike Cox issued an opinion that indicated immigrants cannot be considered a Michigan resident and only a permanent resident should be considered as one under the law. Further, in early 2008, the Michigan Secretary of State implemented Cox's opinion in the law with the immediate effect on denying licenses to all undocumented people, bringing major changes in their lives (MIRC, 2018).

According to existing data in 2018, Michigan has the second highest rate of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) apprehensions and deportations of immigrants in the country, after Pennsylvania, and much of this is due to its lack of access to IDs. According to the ICE Detainers data from 2018, Michigan's rate of this type of arrests is about twice as high as the national rate across the U.S. (TRAC, 2018).



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan facebook page

2) THE VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS: SETTING PRECEDENTS FOR THE DRIVE MICHIGAN FORWARD COALITION

Kalamazoo ID card

Since state-issued identification is essential for everyday life in the US, an alternative for migrants without any regular status in the country became essential. Therefore, a campaign to issue ID cards at the local level was launched in December 2016 in Kalamazoo focused on improving the lives of migrants by offering them dignified and secure opportunities through a local ID. After intense organizing, in 2018 the government of Kalamazoo offered an identification card program for residents who lack documents needed to gain a state ID. This was an extremely relevant milestone for the undocumented community in the city, which showed organizers that restrictive, and racist legal measures put in place at the state level could be fought at the local and grassroots level.[2]

One of the community leaders involved in the identification campaign explained that the key to success was not to use a specific organization as the head of the movement, but the whole community. This meant that the campaign was not only about migrants, but also about the homeless, the destitute, women abused by their partners - in other words, any member of the community in need. This precedent opened the opportunity to strengthen ties between community members and to make visible vulnerable groups such as the immigrants. As WTP-MI organizer Nelly Fuentes said "there was no relationship between the county, the Michigan chamber and undocumented immigrants. (With the ID campaign). That was the first time the authorities saw so many undocumented people together with the same purpose".

Even though the achievement of this ID represented a considerable change in people's lives, it is not a sufficient measure because state and federal programs may not recognize it.

"LET'S START ORGANIZING, STOP ICE DETAINERS"

The rate of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests of undocumented migrants in Michigan is among the highest of the USA. Based on statistics compiled and released by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, between 2017 and 2018, ICE arrested 1,498 immigrants in Michigan, raising concerns from advocates who say the enforcement operations are dividing families and causing anxiety in immigrant communities. As a member of WTP-MI team explained, due to the fact that the lack of driver's licenses in Michigan lead to an arrest, it makes undocumented people more vulnerable to ICE holds:

There were many cases where the sheriff decided to detain individuals for not having a driver's license and hold them for up to 72 hours to wait for ICE to come and take them away.

Another member of the community interviewed for this study shared her story:

This is how I lost my ex-husband. They stopped him driving on the freeway when he came to visit us here in Kalamazoo. They stopped him and asked for his license in 2008, when the licenses had been suspended. Once he was incarcerated, they put an ICE hold on him and once there they deported him. That was the reason why I lost my husband, why my children lost their dad ... And that's what hurts me the most (Interviewee, women).

Prior to the coalition-led campaign to reinstate driving licenses, a campaign was launched in 2018 to stop ICE detention. In particular, in Kalamazoo, WTP-MI worked with an undocumented immigrant-led organization called the Kalamazoo Harvest Movement to launch a campaign that prevented the county sheriff from detaining people for ICE beyond their release date. As a result, they secured local legislation requiring the city and county of Kalamazoo to break financial ties with ICE. Thus, they developed shared leadership that organized their communities to create the power they needed to hold their local officials accountable (Reyes & Ganz, 2019).

In the same framework, through Movimiento Cosecha a play was performed in June 2018 when "Children in Cages: zero tolerance" came to light. In that case, the organization used public opinion against immigration and the poor treatment they suffer, to reinforce the campaign to break ICE holds, so they used the narrative of "this also happens right in your neighborhood", that is, they used the anger of the public to focus on something local that could end in something concrete. So, the immigrant community took to the streets to protest, including people arrested for driving without a license and disrupted the alliance between ICE and local governments that sought to increase deportations of undocumented immigrants in Grand Rapids.

Another example of effective action resulting from leadership development and organizational structure is WTP-MI's campaign in rural Keweenaw, in the northernmost part of Michigan. In that case, they trained 30 local leaders and launched an independent voter organizing project. Consequently, they elected a progressive woman commissioner in a conservative rural county. Stories were used as a part of the campaign to communicate, but also to articulate core values and deepen trust (Reyes & Ganz, 2019).

[2]For additional insights on this issue, see: https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/2018/05/kalamazoo_county_id_opens.html
<https://www.kalcounty.com/clerk/id/>

3) THE CONSTITUTION OF THE DRIVE MICHIGAN FORWARD COALITION

Estimations point out that 130,000 undocumented people in Michigan do not have access to a driver's license or an ID card. In 2008, the state of Michigan decided to revoke driving licenses and IDs for the undocumented. For this reason, immigrants and their allies, through previously established organizations, formed a statewide coalition called Drive Michigan Forward (DMF). As stated on the DMF website, its mission is to build a coalition made up of immigrants and their allies whose goal is to restore driver's licenses to all and pave the way for basic dignity and security for members of our community:

By returning driver's licenses to undocumented Michiganders, we can make Michigan a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and belong

(Drive Michigan Forward, n.d.).

Thus, the DMF coalition arose by immigrants and their allies in order to put forth an inclusive policy which allows all Michigan residents to obtain a driver's license, regardless of the resident situation. In the own words of a stakeholder interviewed for this study:

The community might need a lot of things, for instance better wages, good labor conditions, health and security guarantees but as a whole everything has the same root: to be an undocumented person.

(Cosecha member, 2020)

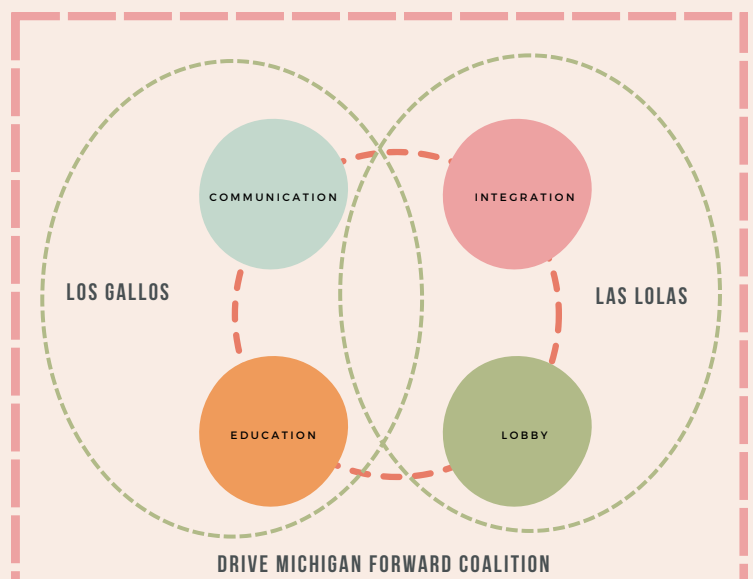
Table below shows which immigrant-led organizations and organizations advocating for the rights of undocumented migrants, and allies who believe in restoring driving licenses to all have created and are members of the DMF coalition.

MEMBERS OF THE DRIVE MICHIGAN FORWARD COALITION

Name of the organizations				
Progress Michigan	Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation	African Bureau of Immigration & Social Affairs	Detroit Jews for Justice	Michigan League for Public Policy
Action of Greater Lansing	Michigan United: Justice and dignity	Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice	Jewish Community Relations Council	Berrien Immigrant Solidarity Network
American Civil Liberties Union Michigan	MI Students Dream	Michigan Immigrant Rights Center	Interfaith Action	We The People-MI

COALITION STRUCTURE

The coalition works through two working teams: "Las Lolas", which focus on the integration part, as well as on the strategy on how they will take the legislation forward, i.e. on lobbying issues; and the other group, called "Los Gallos", which deals with communication, education and community. In this sense, if "Los Gallos" works on shaping the narrative to be communicated, "The Lolas" works on recruiting and integrating new organizations into the coalition.



“IT IS TIME TO FIGHT FOR OUR DRIVER'S LICENSES”

One of the triggers that allowed the campaign, and ultimately the coalition, to convene was precisely the stories of the community of people who crossed the US national border in the face of violence and traumatic experiences in search of a better life. **“If you cross the border, now you can do anything”**, was the emblem of the migrants in reference to restoring driving licenses.

Stories matter: Migrants testimonies on the fear of driving without licenses

On March 29th, the day after his birthday, my husband was stopped by a K-9 police officer when one of the lights on his truck went out. Because his birthday was just one day earlier, his US license had expired. The police didn't care that he had an international driver's license or that he was just waiting for his new license to come. They didn't even know what an international license was. Instead of calling for help to figure out the documentation my husband had, they asked him about his immigration status. My husband was honest with them. He told them he was an immigrant. Next thing he knew, he was being thrown in handcuffs and shipped to an ICE detention center. It took me 24 hours, and the help of the folks at ABISA and Michigan United, before I could locate where my husband was. It took 24 hours for us to find out that he had been detained over two hours away at an ICE facility in Battle Creek. It would take 20 more days before we could tie all of his information together, see a judge, and have ICE let him go when he finally got his authorization to work and got his license back. We lost income. My husband was gone for 20 days. We had to get the money together to pay his bond and find legal support. All of this happened because his license expired by one day. If we had driver's licenses for all in Michigan, this would have never happened to my husband. This wouldn't happen to the thousands of hard-working immigrant people in this state (Alsina, Detroit).

I am also an immigrant, and a proud daughter of immigrants, and I know many people who risk their livelihood and ability to live in this state every day because they don't have a driver's license. But the fact of the matter is that they still have to be able to get to work, to go to the doctor, and to get their groceries. The fact is that people drive with or without a license because they have no other choice. I live out in Sparta and as everyone knows, it's a rural area and there's a big need to drive from place to place. There is no public transportation system, there are no cabs, and Uber is too expensive to use to get to and from work every day when you live out in the country. What other choice are the people who live in Sparta, and other rural part of Michigan, going to do? We need driver's licenses for everybody. It will keep undocumented immigrants safe and keep other Michiganders safe too. Whether that is properly learning traffic laws or feeling just a little bit safer if a police officer pulls you over for a faulty blinker (Elvira, Sparta).

Source: Drive Michigan Forward coalition website

ORGANIZING CHALLENGES

In terms of the coalition's **internal challenges**, interviewed members of the coalition pointed out at two aspects that they as a team should bear in mind. First, that constituents' demands can easily exceed the capacity that each organization has as a single institution, and that the objectives of the coalition should therefore be considered as those of the coalition – not as particular of any of its constituting organizations. Second, the on-going fragmentation of the political left which might tend to also affect the coalition, as it is joined by a diversity of organizations that are located at different points of the left-wing/center-left political spectrum. The challenge in this regard becomes how to put in place strategies that allow them to work together respecting their differences, but also doing justice to the shared purpose of the coalition.

On the other hand, in terms of **external challenges**, team members pointed out two circumstances that affected their work dynamics: the politics of the Trump era (2017-2021); and the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the first one, in response to the public charge rule revision developed during the Trump-era, the Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) was enforced in Michigan in 2018. The PIF policy was intended to formalize how the immigration officials determine whether a person applying for a nonimmigrant visa or green card is likely to become a public charge that renders the person inadmissible to the United States. Under this rule, the determination of who is likely to become a public charge is largely dictated by the subjective analyses that immigration officials must conduct. As a result, many people, especially immigrants, stopped using certain public services such as the Medicaid benefits or children's health coverage, because they felt afraid of this measure. The PIF Michigan campaign was led by immigrant service provider organizations (some of which are currently part of the DMF coalition), community members and leaders, such as: The Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, The Michigan League for Public Policy, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation, Voces, African

Bureau of Immigration & Social Affairs, and the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services. It is worth mentioning that during the public comment period of the proposed rule in 2018 the campaign generated over 30,000 public comments in opposition to the rule. Since then, the PIF campaign has focused on public education, community outreach, working with state and federal departments and officials (Protecting Immigrant Families - Michigan, 2018).

On its side, the emergence of COVID-19 in March 2020 made the DMF coalition to have to focus on those urgent issues derived from it, ranging from having to provide aid and food to those undocumented migrant families who lost their job, to seek ways to help those children who because of lockdown stopped attending in person school classes, and had to do it online while their parents were working and were not able to help. The coalition faced the challenge of maintaining the commitment and request of its members during this emergency, with the understanding that each had to reorganize its own priorities and structure. Even though this hard situation, during COVID-19 the DMF coalition worked intensively to get a hearing in the lame-duck session on the reinstatement of driving licenses at the end of 2020.[3] To that end, while in many parts of the world and also in Michigan people still in lockdowns and navigating COVID-19, the DMF coalition organized intensively for this to happen: some its members focused on doing all the research behind the restoring of driving licenses to be able to carefully present it to policy-makers, others focused on developing the communicating campaign doing videos and different type of infographics and disseminating them online, and others went knocking on doors explaining their own stories as undocumented migrants and connecting with neighbors as part of the deep canvassing campaign. However, on September 14, 2021, at the very last minute, the hearing on the driver's license bill was canceled by the Speaker of the House. To date, the hearing has not been rescheduled.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN 2021 AND 2022?



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan facebook page



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan facebook page

2021-2022 RECAP

- In May 2021, Democratic lawmakers in Michigan introduced a pair of bills that would restore access to driver's licenses regardless of immigration status. A hearing in a GOP-led House committee was expected, but was canceled at the last minute. "The bills would make Michigan non-commercial driver's licenses and state ID cards available to applicants who do not have proof of U.S. citizenship or immigration status. In addition, the bills remove the "lawful presence" requirement to prove Michigan residency and specify the types of documentation allowed to prove Michigan residency and identity for the new category of documents. In doing so, the bills would prohibit discrimination and increased police scrutiny of individuals holding licenses issued under the new section of the law" (Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, 2019).
- By means of a robust canvass operation conducted by WTP-MI, the Detroit crew helped shift local power toward progressives and elected Ms. Gabriela Santiago-Romero, an immigrant from Mexico, raised in Southwest Detroit and an active organizer in Michigan, to City Council in District 6.[4]
- WTP held three workshops in 2021 on community organizing and trained 80 leaders in Macomb County, Benton Harbor and across the UP (Source: WTP-MI facebook page).
- Regarding the PIF campaign, in 2022, the Biden Administration ended the Trump-era public charge policy.
- In February 2022, the coalition led a "Week of Action" to advocate for the reinstatement of driver's licenses for all. The intent was to urge policymakers to reschedule the Drive SAFE hearing through community messaging that explained the negative impact of driver's licenses on the lives of loved ones. The planned actions, launched on social media, began with a live stream on February 14 for Valentine's Day with the hashtag #Licenses4Loved.
- Currently, the DMF coalition is still working to have a committee hearing before the House Rules and Competitiveness Committee in Michigan on the Drive SAFE (Security, Access, Freedom and Economy) bills to reinstate driver's licenses for all, regardless of immigration status. This has not occurred yet.

[3] A Lame-Duck Session is adopted by the US Congress to conclude urgent or unfinished tasks before the successor's term begins. It supposes the last chance for elected officials who have introduced a bill to push it as far as possible before the session closes.

[4] For more information visit: <http://gabrielasantiagoromero.com>

B) CONVENING A WAY TO WORK TOGETHER

This section explores in which ways the public narrative pedagogy used by WTP-MI and as a core aspect of its working dynamics, has been in turn adapted and used for team formation in the DMF coalition.

SITTING DOWN FACE TO FACE AND GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER: KNITTING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

I think about public narrative in this way, first, like how we're understanding what motivates and moves us to want to do this type of work... The type of work that we're doing requires quite a lot of sacrifice, that requires us to decide that we're going to go into really hard shit all the time. And that means that it has to really matter... This involves some type of deep commitment to doing that work and that comes from experiences that we've had from values that we carry from ways (...) And what are the experiences that I've been through that have motivated me to do that. It's a pretty personal exploration of what that is. But it's also really important that we're able to articulate that in order to build trust with folks (WTP-MI member)

The extract from above is from a conversation with Art Reyes, executive director of WTP-MI. What he explains captures the work that WTP-MI did in convening together those diverse organizations that are currently part of the DMF coalition, and seeding the ground to work together, building up relationships based, among all, on trust:

WTP-MI has been successful with partners... But according to WTP, things have to move at the speed of trust. And sometimes this is not as quick as we want to be... but... (...) Organizing is hard, but prioritizing transformational relationships is even difficult... It means working in a particular way (DMF organizer)

The use of public narrative within the WTP-MI organization has worked as part of a community organizing pedagogy that has enabled its members to do that type of introspective work that Art Reyes mentions. This way, the use of public narrative through intersubjective dialogue and conversations among each other have allowed WTP-MI organizers to dive deep in what are those very personal motivations that lead them to do the type of work they do, and why do they commit with each other, and with the work they embrace. This is an exercise that members of WTP-MI have been trained in, crafting Stories of Self, a Story of Us, and a Story of Now, which then they have used at the time of facilitating team formation of the DMF coalition:

[When working with new people in the DMF] Doing that was really important. Sitting down with representatives of other organizations and getting to know each other. Sharing my story, and getting to know why they were doing the work they were doing helped us to get where others were (WTP-MI member)



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan facebook page

This way, the use of storytelling in the framework of constituting the DMF coalition has served to get to know and “discover” other individuals who, coming with different stories and backgrounds, share similar motivations. This is explained by another member of the coalition, who emphasizes how the priority of the coalition at the time of bringing the people in has been rooting it on shared values:

“*My boss for example, **she thought that organizers were terrible...** and just really annoying to work with... **until she met WTP.** It's the value of listening (...) For instance, in the communication group – Nelly didn't have experience in communication but she joined the meeting just to guide it and to root the communication in values. Guiding the narrative – community voices are listened to – the communication group was predominantly white. So they asked: Why are you here? Who are you bringing into this campaign? (DMF organizer)*”



Photo courtesy of We The People Michigan facebook page

Rooting actions in shared values has been key at the time of putting together a variety of organizations based in Michigan which even with a progressive agenda, work from different angles (e.g.: doing legal and advocacy issues, working directly with the community, etc.), and in some cases had not worked together in the past. The use of stories and of the public narrative pedagogy facilitated team formation within the coalition. This is explained by two individuals who are members of different organizations within the coalition:

I think the biggest difference from other past coalitions of which we have been part of is that ... we were either with groups that are very similar to us, like to do the exact same type of work we do or we're working across the aisle with more conservative groups. So, we are usually it's kind of like, okay, we're working with a team that's very similar to us the way we work, or we are the liberals in the room, you know... So, I think the biggest difference here is really having those kinds of grassroots groups and seeing how they do things (...) that's been the most refreshing part... is having that energy and excitement and enthusiasm and really there's something different because I sense when I sit at this table or now when we sit at our zoom, we really care about each other. It's not just a meeting. It feels like we have a connection that is deeper than just this goal (...) (DMF organizer)

Another member of the coalition also mentions how stories are embedded in the coalition's way of working, and on the type of relationships fostered within and beyond it, with others across Michigan:

We are definitely interested in policies that are gonna support people really holistically, giving them the ability to drive in Michigan and I think this policy has to do with that and also (...) over the last 10 years my sense is that the position of the organization I represent have been much more delivered about doing work, about getting involved with community organizations and community partnerships, which I think is a really important shift. I think in particular with undocumented community here in Michigan that's a group that is often left out of the policy discussions and this policy and the work that the coalition is doing really focuses on them. And so here is the role of WTP, MI which is a grassroots organization, to come to us and to other similar organizations and saying: "we'd love to partner with you on this". And this is a great opportunity for us to support this issue and to land what we can for the campaign (member of the DMF coalition – legal expertise).

Another aspect that emerged in the conversations with members of the coalition was how because of setting a common ground to work together since the very beginning of the coalition formation, getting to know each other knowing for what they care, enabled them to hold each other accountable during their monthly meetings, and also to better navigate conflicts when they emerged:

I facilitated a conflict resolution meeting between two of the organizing groups that we interact with. The goal was not for them to talk to each other about each other, but to hear, from each other, their own feelings. I think of conflict resolution from the point of view of learning from each other, especially where the other person is coming from and what their mindset was to get to the positions they had. And from there, the conversation goes around what we want now and how we can work to get there. What is the way we want the world to look for us (WTP-MI organizer).

In all, evidence collected shows that when members of a team come together knowing their motivations, daring to share and to connect with each other on that personal basis, team formation and later functioning works more smoothly. Storytelling and in particular public narrative enhanced this to happen.

AGREEING A SHARED AGENDA BASED ON COMMUNITY NEEDS, AND NOT ON THE NEEDS OF SINGLE ORGANIZATIONS: CRAFTING THE STORY OF NOW

Another aspect of the coalition was the willingness of organizations to come up together to work on an issue that was important for their constituencies, undocumented migrants in Michigan, and not on those single issues of each organization. Evidence gathered reveal that the intentional use by WTP of the public narrative pedagogy as a practice grounded on shared experiences, and deeply relational, and the way how WTP-MI brought it to the DMF coalition, facilitated building understanding and shared purpose.

At the moment of gathering data in 2020 there were less than 10 organizations, but in 2022 organizations which are members of the coalition are 16, which are spread across Michigan. This idea of focusing not on organization issues but on the community's issues was well explained by WTP-MI members when discussing among themselves in a focus group on the importance of doing this if a different organizing ecosystem wanted to be built. Organizers of WTP-MI explained that this is a long overdue debt that organizations need to do in Michigan, thus being accountable to constituents and not to funders:

“

We build relationships in depth; we function with trust. Listening to the community's stories and understanding what has happened to them allows us to create deep and meaningful bonds (WTP-MI organizer).

”

Thus, sharing values and establishing a common purpose are not only prerequisites for collective action, but also the basis for building a shared identity among different actors – posing the question of which Michigan do we want:

I think we slowly started to tell a more complete story about what Michigan is, to be honest about our state's divisions, where the sort of fault lines are... But also, you know, it does not reach for like a kind of bland unity but says no, there are like forces deliberately dividing us and they are not just pitting us against each other, but they are scapegoating certain groups (poor communities black and brown communities, immigrant communities). And they want us weak... So, we've started to weave that in the different entities, different campaigns and the driver's license campaign has definitely been one of the more prominent (member of the DMF coalition – legal expertise).

Another idea that came up while talking with members of the coalition was that of ensuring that organizations represented in it would bring in different skills which were going to be needed at the time of strategizing. This way, organizations vary in the type of expertise they have, some of them being more experts at the time of reaching out to the community, others when legal aspects have to be approached, or others at the time of developing the communication campaign. However, in doing this, the message communicated is the same: how the rights of undocumented migrants are violated because of not having the driving licenses, and how in order to overcome this power needs to be restored:

“

And instead, what we have been doing is pushing people and saying, no, this is not an economic issue. This is not a law-and-order issue. This is a dignity issue that immigrants as human means inherently or what and deserve these rights and driver's license is a step in that. It is not the full dignity package. Just one small step that undocumented communities have asked us to do and work on and we're responding to a call, but it's not the full picture. So I think the role that we play is like reminding people of that and also finding other organizations and other people who understand it and can help us do that like personal transformation (member of the DMF coalition – communications expertise).

”

In the excerpts shared in this section is observed how an on-going issue within the coalition and a special concern of some of the organizations member of the coalition is how to keep remembering its people and the publics in general (those who might be familiar with the undocumented migrants' situation, and those who are not) that restoring the driving licenses to undocumented migrants it is not an economic issue, a public safety issue, nor a privilege, but is something deeply related with the migrants' dignity, and the Michigan they all want:



Photo courtesy of Michigan Advance website

“ You know, previously and still the case in a bunch of places that immigration issues are framed all around deserving and undeserving. And I always like to make this argument that like we don't use that for any other marginalized group of people. We like never say we need to give like LGBT rights because they bring in money to the economy because they pay taxes. And past campaigns and like sometimes we still get people in the coalition or other community members are like want to have the argument or driver's license be on money and economy and public safety in terms of law and order. And instead, what we have been doing is pushing people and saying, no, this is not an economic issue. This is not a law and order issue. This is a dignity issue that immigrants as human means inherently or what and deserve these rights and driver's license is a step in that (member of the DMF coalition – communications expertise).

”

In all, putting the needs of the undocumented migrant community at the center of any strategy and action taken by the coalition because of this being a matter of dignity lays at the core of its mission, and of its shared vision of Michigan as a land where everybody can grow, develop and progress. The Deep Canvassing program, explained below, led by WTP-MI is an example of that.

DEEP CANVASSING: ANOTHER WAY TO SHARE THE MESSAGE

A Deep Canvassing Program was put in place by WTP-MI to organize and campaign across 12 different counties in Michigan leading up to the November 2020 election. The idea behind the deep canvassing program was to have anti-racism conversations revolving around the criminal justice system, increasing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) leadership in local politics, and reducing prejudice. The whole program was held remotely, talking with voters over the phone.

To this end, the program set out to establish genuine and unique connections with each voter using listening tools, curiosity, and storytelling. The experience of WTP-MI community organizers using the public narrative pedagogy directly capitalized on developing and organizing volunteers to engage in this program. WTP trained volunteers on how to pick up the phone and set meaningful conversations with other Michiganders, no matter if the conversation lasted 1 minute or 30 minutes:

and the deep canvassing program is rooted in Story of Self. It's about going into a person's home knocking on the door and saying, Hey, this is me, ... This is my story. It's more complicated than that of course... but... that's the basic. So the driver's license campaign with the deep canvassing along with the with already like the fertile ground that has been created in northern Michigan. I mean, there's a chance that we can change the landscape in order for Drivers' License to happen. And so yes driver's license is very important, but it's just a part of the whole ingrained (WTP-MI organizer; focus group).

WTP organizers interviewed shared some of their experiences while leading the deep canvassing program. One of them explained that a good number of people participating in the deep canvass in the Upper Peninsula in Michigan only started believing in the potential of deep canvassing to engage with and convince voters, because of the stories that once would hear. She explained that for many white Michiganders the story of undocumented migrants when is claimed and explained in abstract might sound not familiar at all for them. However, when specific situations are shared, when it comes to sharing issues that undocumented migrants might face when needed to provide for their sons or daughters, or when it comes to being worried for losing their job, or even missing their homeland, those aspects might resonate with the own personal stories of those who are on the other side, listening to. In one of the training sessions that was observed for this study, WTP-MI volunteers shared how in many cases the use of deep canvassing strategies helped engaging with those most skeptical voters, and this was attributed precisely to the ability of engaging at the personal level with the other. In this case, the use of deep canvassing and including in it strategies which are particular of the public narrative pedagogy allows to call on others' basic emotions, thus calling on other's empathy:

We both want the same thing but we talked about it differently, but at the bottom, we want the basic thing. For this, public narrative has helped me to build that connection (WTP-MI organizer; focus group).

I have clients in my organization with 16-year-olds who don't know they can't have a license and the parents delay the moment to tell them that they will never be able to get a license... And honestly, is because I hear those stories why I stay involved. I stayed once with all the DACAs and we were talking... and I realized that everyone's normal conversation was that their parents were alcoholics. I realized that only an idiot will believe that they are drunk because they are Latino or immigrant. Come on... This alcoholism and dependency have to do with the level of stress with which they live every day, they live worried about going to work and facing the risk of not coming back home because of being arrested... How can you live like this for 15, 20 years? (member of the DMF coalition).

If one of the strategies used by WTP-MI in the program was to telephone people to learn more about their concerns and worries, the next step was to think about the actions and decisions they needed to take to make that future real. The deep canvassing program as a strategy to shift power in Michigan influenced the election of a progressive candidate in one of the districts in Detroit, Michigan. This was the case of candidate Gabriela Santiago Romero, who until the moment of their election for the City Council in District 6 in Detroit had been a community organizer in WTP-MI. In this regard, Art Reyes mentioned how part of the success of her campaign was that she made an incredible effort going door by door getting to know people in the district, and also that she rejected corporate money. Santiago's campaign based on three pillars: trust, that is, a campaign dedicated to build connections between local government and residents; transparency, as a campaign that was fully supported and funded by the people; and service, that is, the idea of believing that the city of Detroit's leadership and resources should be accessible and accountable to the community.

GABRIELA'S STORY



Photo courtesy of Gabriela Santiago's website

Gabriela Santiago-Romero joined We the People Michigan in 2019 as Policy and research Director/Manager. She is an immigrant from Mexico and raised in Detroit. She fights for justice and rights. She has spent time as an active organizer in Michigan, connecting people. Growing up as an immigrant in a difficult economic context, she understood the importance of giving people a voice, to empower them.

What drove me to become a social worker are my life experiences...Seeing my neighborhood struggle as much as I did, pushed me to be a social worker and to come up with collective solutions, with the people and not for them.

(Gabriela Santiago, NASW Michigan interview).

In addition, working to advance just public policies through We The People-Michigan built a strong relationship with the community and a deep sense of belonging and meaning; which put her on the path to the City Council.

She led without qualms with a bold vision and her values. She won by 50 points, repping the community she calls home.

(Art Reyes from WTP-MI, twitter personal account).

This represents not only an example of a collective achievement that worked together with the community to change the political course of the county, but also shows the impact of agentic action, fostered by public narrative.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has explored the way how WTP-MI has used the public narrative pedagogy to facilitate relationships among organizations which joined the DMF coalition, and how this pedagogy has enhanced learning to work together as a team, setting up common understandings and shared purpose. Looking at the complexity that the issue of restoring the drivers' licenses in Michigan suppose would be worth further analysis. Evidence gathered so far shows that the use of the public narrative pedagogy has enhanced two underlying aspects that were of utmost importance for team formation and effective group working. First, sharing personal stories to know each other and establish a common base, thus crafting and having a sense of a Story of Us. Second, facilitating that the organizations members of the coalition do not focus on their own needs and on their single agenda, but rather focus as a group on the urgency of tackling their constituents' needs, in this case the need of making possible that undocumented migrants in Michigan can get driving licenses. Acknowledging the intention of doing this in future collaborations, I can pose some final reflections from my approach to this social reality, informed by hours of conversations with members of the coalition and public documentation revised and obtained from multiple sites.

An initial aspect that should be pointed out is that public narrative and the use of storytelling were coached as part of the organizing methodology characteristic of WTP-MI and then brought to the DMF coalition. WTP-MI's role in the coalition and in Michigan itself through its workshops and coaching programs is based on the process of learning from each other and giving voice to people's stories. The public narrative pedagogy framed within the community organizing methodology enables this on-going peer learning journey, using stories as a means to weave networks among members who had no relationship before.

WTP-MI deep concern on how to restore power and put it "in the right hands" impregnates its way of working and of understanding what its mission should be, that of seeding the ground to transform the organizing ecosystem in Michigan. In the framework of the DMF work, the intentional and strategic use of the public narrative pedagogy -promoted by WTP-MI- serves as a tool to humanize not only the relationships created within the coalition, but also the shared mission, as well as the narrative that is articulated and communicated to the wide publics -working along ethnic and racial lines, urban-rural contexts, and different socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, the use of storytelling as part of the underlying aspects of the DMF campaign is facilitating the establishment of links between its various actors (community, organizations, politicians, authorities, decision-makers, etc.), based on trust and solidarity.

Findings discussed in this report unveil that the use of public narrative enhanced building and strengthening social relationships among members of the DMF coalition. Members of the coalition interviewed explained how they went from not knowing each other and in most cases not having worked together in the past, to disclosing personal experiences that have shaped their attitudes and behaviors about why they care for the dignity of undocumented migrants in Michigan. Sharing with others their personal journeys as well as promoting this type of dialogic type of communication enabled being able to discuss and dialogue about those challenges encountered, those moments where they had to make tough choices at the time of strategizing, as well as to identify with others sources of hope and courage that made them believe that a different Michigan is possible.

This study reveals that those activities oriented to relationship building cannot be neglected as they are pivotal in activating effective leadership and creating a dynamic environment capable of building and sustaining organizational capacity. This is fundamental for the type of organizing that WTP-MI envisions: creating and strengthening an organizational ecosystem that puts people at the center, thus paving the way for the development of leaderships that strive to meet the demands of the community. In other words, seeding a transformational and emancipatory organizing environment, in which organizations working at the grassroots level are not accountable to funders but to constituents.

Doing an in-depth analysis of the campaign's organizational effectiveness considering the outcomes achieved would require examining other aspects beyond those tackled in this study [1]. However, evidence suggests that developing a leadership grounded on interpersonal relationships where there are bonds of trust and solidarity, and in which there is a clear 'shared purpose' (the Us dimension) does matter for effective change to happen.

Although the campaign has not yet reached its goal, the program set, and milestones achieved have helped to engage organizations, politicians and decision-makers to address the needs of the community. The driving licenses of undocumented migrants is today one of the issues in the public agenda, which is being asked to be tackled.

[1] Andrews, K. T., Ganz, M., Baggetta, M., Han, H., & Andrews, K. T. (2013) Leadership , Membership , and Voice : Civic Associations That Work; 1, 115(4), 1191-1242.

A PATCHWORK OF STORIES THAT ARE WORTH TO BE SHARED

My people were afraid to attending to protests or actions. We didn't go to anything governmental, ever. But that day they went and stood up and said... "We need the IDs", they said. For me that was the success of the campaign. To say "I have rights and I'm going to have them validated". It was inexplicable what I felt there. It was the first time the county commission chamber had ever seen so many undocumented people, it filled the room, we filled the room. Never in the history of Kalamazoo had anything like that ever been done (Nely Fuentes from WTP-MI, personal story).

Now that we are fighting for licenses: we say, we go to the county council. There is no fear anymore to show up there and complain. They don't think about what's going to happen next (DMF coalition member).

That day she hid behind me, she was very nervous about possible retaliation by the police. Now, she is the one leading the movement. Even, she lost the fear of leaving her husband, because he was abusive. Now she is living with her kids. It's a growth for the movement and for her personal life (DMF coalition member).

Using my story when we were working on the ID campaign made me feel guilty because I thought I was victimizing myself, but learning how the public narrative actually works made a change. The story of self doesn't serve to make you a victim, but to show your plight. The story of self is a story of victory of the self within oneself, the one that allows us to tell our stories with agency(DMF coalition member).

That if I have a license I am less stressed, that I am not in danger of being stopped by the police and asked for my documents. If I drive without a license I'm going to end up arrested and go into the jail system they share information with immigration and it's a traffic violation arrest becomes deportation and a family separation" so the community knows what it needs (DMF coalition member).

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Public Narrative underlying the We The People Michigan Pedagogy, and its use in the Drive Michigan Forward Coalition

RESEARCH REPORT
CASE STUDY 2
NARRATIVES4CHANGE PROJECT
MARCH 2022

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