



michigan
united

JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

Michigan United's 2018 Annual Report

Don't wait for opportunity... create it.

2018 was a remarkable year for Michigan United. Collectively, we rose to the challenge facing our democracy. More than resisting the further assaults on our communities, I'm proud that we stood together and fought for proactive, positive change. We were a vehicle for regular people finding their voice and leading change.

There were incredible highlights to our work this year. Dozens of our members led a pilgrimage from Central United Methodist Church to Lansing in honor of the families who have taken sanctuary at the church. Immigrant youth sat in for the DREAM Act. Leaders from Southwest Detroit crashed the Marathon Petroleum shareholders meeting to demand justice and clean air for their community. Many of our members ran for office, and won. This is the story of a dynamic, evolving organization that is able to fight on multiple fronts and unite the many communities that share our vision of a more progressive future.

I'm most proud of the work we led relative to the race for governor. Starting in early 2017, we developed a set of campaign platforms around our issues. We then met with the candidates for governor, educating them about our communities' needs, and demanding that they

endorse our vision. We then held a series of candidate forums, including the largest in the state with 1500 people in Detroit, to show our power. We then shifted into get-out-the-vote and talked to thousands of voters. These activities resulted in strong commitments from now Governor Whitmer on specific policies to promote immigrants rights, reform our prison system, and advance our plan for long-term care. We have moved from resisting towards playing a role in governing.

This shift was made possible by the heroic and relentless efforts of our membership and staff. I have been truly awed by their dedication and grit. I look forward to working together next year when, hopefully, our dreams can become realities.

*-Ryan Bates,
Executive Director*

Annual Report | 2018



Our mission & vision

Michigan United's mission is to build a more just world through community organizing. We win strategic campaigns to address the root causes of poverty and racism.

We believe each individual has the right to achieve their full human potential and to live in dignity.

We believe our government and economy should provide for the common good and be accountable to all our communities, not just the powerful.

We believe in our compassionate obligation toward our neighbors, and to support their struggles toward fulfillment and liberation.

We believe people of conscience and people of faith have an obligation to step forward in leadership to ensure that our government and economy reflect our values of dignity, fairness, equity, and opportunity.

We believe in the power of democracy and non-violence.

We believe it is our mission to work together to build the power we need to win the justice our communities deserve.

Contents

Executive Director Statement	2
Mission & Vision	3
Immigrant Rights	4
Legal Services	5
Environmental Justice	6
Member Spotlights	6-7
Movement Politics	8
Criminal Justice	9
Caring Majority	9
Member Spotlights	10-11
Financial Summary & Metrics	12-13

To stay up-to-date with what's happening in our organization, please visit us on the web:

miunited.org



Immigrant Rights

This year was a huge year for the immigration program. We played a leading role in the fight against the most egregious attacks on immigrant families.

We led the fight in Michigan against deportations that are ripping families apart. This included numerous marches against family separations at the border, and educating the public about the reasons why people are fleeing Central America.

We also helped lead the fight to win permanent protection for immigrant youth (Dreamers) who currently have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The DREAM Team led a relentless campaign, and even held a sit-in in Senator Stabenow's office, which helped force a government shutdown over the issue.

We also continued our campaigns on behalf of two families in sanctuary. The Rranxbrgaj family from Albania, is holding off their deportation by sheltering in Detroit's Central United Methodist Church. Flora Rranxbrgaj has multiple sclerosis, and is too sick to fly or leave her family. Shaheeda Nadeem from Pakistan is sheltering in the 1st Congregational Church of Kalamazoo. Her son Samad even

worked with us as an organizer during election season. We held numerous events to highlight the struggle of these two families as symbols of the unjust immigration system. Supporters of the Rranxbrgaj's even organized a pilgrimage from Detroit to Lansing, stopping to give talks at churches and community centers along the way.

Our immigration services center in Kalamazoo got their accreditation this year, and we launched ESL classes in West Michigan.

This was also a hard year for leaders who have been involved in Michigan United since the beginning: Cindy & Jorge Garcia. They have been fighting Jorge's deportation for nearly a decade — Cindy is a US Citizen, and they have two US citizen children. No one would benefit by tearing apart this family who pays their taxes, owns their home, and volunteers to help the needy. On Martin Luther King Day, Jorge finally lost his fight and boarded a flight to Mexico. The Garcias were brave enough to allow the media to document that horrible moment, so that we could all feel the pain of having our family torn apart. As a result, their story became international news, and Cindy a national spokesperson for families fighting deportations.

Legal Services

Michigan United provides immigration legal services through our Department of Justice accredited program. Staff at our Kalamazoo and Detroit locations are certified to represent clients and execute filings.

In 2018, we performed the following legal services:

64 Applications for Naturalization and Citizenship

67 Applications for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

21 Renewal applications for Permanent Residency (Green Cards)

1 Deportation Case

45 One-on-one consultations regarding other immigration matters

Approximately **15,000** attendees at immigration know-your-rights events



Environmental Justice

Flint: In Flint, our organizing committee played a decisive role protecting the right of citizens to sue if their water is contaminated. The Flint City Council refused to release the content of the new contract with the Great Lakes Water Authority, but pressure from Michigan United members made the contract public. The team then quickly analyzed the document, and discovered that the new contract indemnified the GLWA against any future legal action by Flint residents. The City Council claimed to have no idea that the provision was in the contract. After quickly educating the Council and publicizing the matter, the contract was renegotiated, and the legal rights of Flint residents preserved.

Marathon: This year, the campaign to protect the residents of the Boynton neighborhood in Southwest Detroit from Marathon Petroleum's toxic emissions went public. The expansion of Marathon's refinery has left the community in Boynton surrounded by industry, and choking on poisonous air pollution. Residents report sky-high rates of cancer and lung disease.

This is a classic case of environmental racism. Several years ago, Marathon recognized the impact its emissions were having on the community, and bought out the primarily white neighborhood next door. The primarily African-American residents of Boynton were left to fend for themselves amid the toxins.

This year, the campaign launched with an "Exodus" themed protest in front of Marathon's gates. Then, residents bought Marathon stock, and sent a delegation to the shareholders meeting so they could directly confront the CEO. This resulted in a meeting with high-level Marathon executives and the local organizing team. Now the case is getting national attention after numerous accidents at the refinery.

Roquesha O'Neal

Member Spotlight

Being a single, working mother and full-time caregiver is not easy. Detroit and family advocate Roquesha O'Neal learned this the hard way when her grandfather grew ill in 2003, and again when her son was diagnosed with an illness in 2007.

In addition to caring for her own family full-time, Roquesha is a caregiver to people of all ages in her community, helping out whenever needed.

Roquesha attended her first Michigan United Caring Majority meeting in 2017 and felt her spirit awaken with an enlarged calling. After having experienced firsthand what it's like to be a caregiver and seeing how funding could be drastically improved in Michigan, she immediately knew she had to get involved on a larger scale. Feeling inspired and empowered to create change, Roquesha joined the Michigan Caring Majority core team and became a committee member.



In the spring of 2018, Roquesha worked closely with the Caring Majority team to organize a day of action at the State Capitol where she and dozens others met with state representatives. She believes real change can happen if people from all backgrounds take a seat at the table and share their own care stories.

"Being invited to share my story about elder and child care was an honor. I would never pass up the opportunity because it's not every day a single mom from Detroit is invited to speak and meet her representatives. I felt powerful and that my voice mattered."

Since the Capitol Day, Roquesha remains

actively and passionately involved with Michigan United and her community. She has organized and spoken at numerous events, sharing her story of being a caregiver with hundreds of people throughout Michigan and inspiring others to get involved with the organization. Roquesha visits senior homes in Detroit, talking with caregivers and seniors to make sure their voices and concerns are heard.

Why does Roquesha commit so much time and energy to Michigan United, her family and her community? "When you love something or someone, you make the time," she explains.

"...it's not every day a single mom from Detroit is invited to speak and meet her representatives. I felt powerful and that my voice mattered."

"If you would've told me a year and a half ago that I would be organizing events and speaking for my community, I wouldn't have believed you. But Michigan United has taught me so much."

Member Spotlight

Juan Gonzalez

Juan Gonzalez has spent most of his life as an undocumented immigrant. His father, who left Mexico in the late 1980s on a work permit, brought Juan and his sister to the United States in the early 1990s, when Juan was only a baby. Mexico was where Juan was born, but he considers America his home.

"I know no other place, this is the only place I've known. I grew up here, my friends are here, most of my family is here."

When Juan started high school, he quickly started to realize exactly what it meant to be an undocumented immigrant. While all of his classmates were landing their first jobs and applying to colleges, Juan was not able to. It was not until President Obama signed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order that Juan could begin to step out of the shadows.

"I got a full-time job, bought a house, bought a car and

started college. It was marvelous."

But all of that was threatened when Donald Trump took office and promised to end DACA. Juan saw the stories and lies being spread by Trump that immigrants are bad and a drain on the country. He knew this was not true.

"I was sick of people telling my story for me. I was ready to tell it myself."

Juan started researching organizations that help with immigration and discovered Michigan United. Almost immediately, Juan was given opportunities to share his story at events and rallies.

Everything he knows about activism is because of Michigan United, which gave Juan the opportunity to put his ideas into action.

"If you would've told me a year and a half ago that I would be organizing events and speaking for my community, I wouldn't have believed you. But Michigan United has taught me so much."

Juan's work with Michigan United makes him feel hopeful for the future of young immigrants. Every time he walks through the office, Juan sees a full house of people working, at all hours of the day and night. Michigan United always listens to immigrant activists like Juan and include them in the work. For Juan, this is what democracy is — to be listened to.



Movement Politics

Our non-partisan civic engagement program helped thousands of Michiganders use their voice at the polls this year. We held 10 voter forums across the state to educate voters about candidates for office, ballot initiatives, and how to vote.

We also led a year-long process to engage candidates for governor and educate them about our issues. We met with four candidates, and many of them embraced our agenda. We then organized candidate forums across the state, which included the largest candidate forum of the year, with 1500 people in Detroit.

We also trained 70 of our members to run for office or work on a campaign, and approximately half of them did. Our Movement Politics Academy intentionally recruits people who have traditionally been excluded from politics in our state: women, people of color, and working-class people. We're trying to build political leadership in Michigan that actually looks like our state.

We also endorsed Proposal 2 and Proposal 3 to promote fair elections and end partisan gerrymandering in Michigan. Our canvassers and volunteers contacted thousands of voters in Southwest Detroit and Macomb County.

Criminal Justice

Our criminal justice program can claim several victories this year.

Our team helped lead the work in Michigan for the First Step Act, and secured the support of the Michigan delegation for this important reform. As a result, federal sentences will be reduced and more resources will be provided for re-entry services.

In Detroit, we supported the work of the Fair Chance Housing coalition.

At the local level, we won important reforms in the suspension and expulsion policies in Kalamazoo public schools. Also, we won a commitment from the City of Kalamazoo to enforce federal rules that prevent discrimination against returning citizens (ex-offenders) in public housing. The team continues to work on eliminating "no loitering" signs that are used as a pretext for "stop and frisk" harassment by police in African-American neighborhoods.

Caring Majority

Our campaign for universal family care is picking up steam. We're fighting to ensure that every family has access to the care they need – whether that's quality affordable child care, health care, or long-term care for the elderly. Too often, these basics of a dignified life are a privilege for those who can afford it. It doesn't have to be that way.

This year, the Care Team notched a major victory. They secured bipartisan support

for a bill that would study our state's long-term care infrastructure, and make recommendations to the legislature. The study will examine how we can create a new system that allows our elders to afford long-term care, without bankrupting them or their children. The passage of this bill and the completion of the study will be a major step forward to our vision of Universal Family Care.

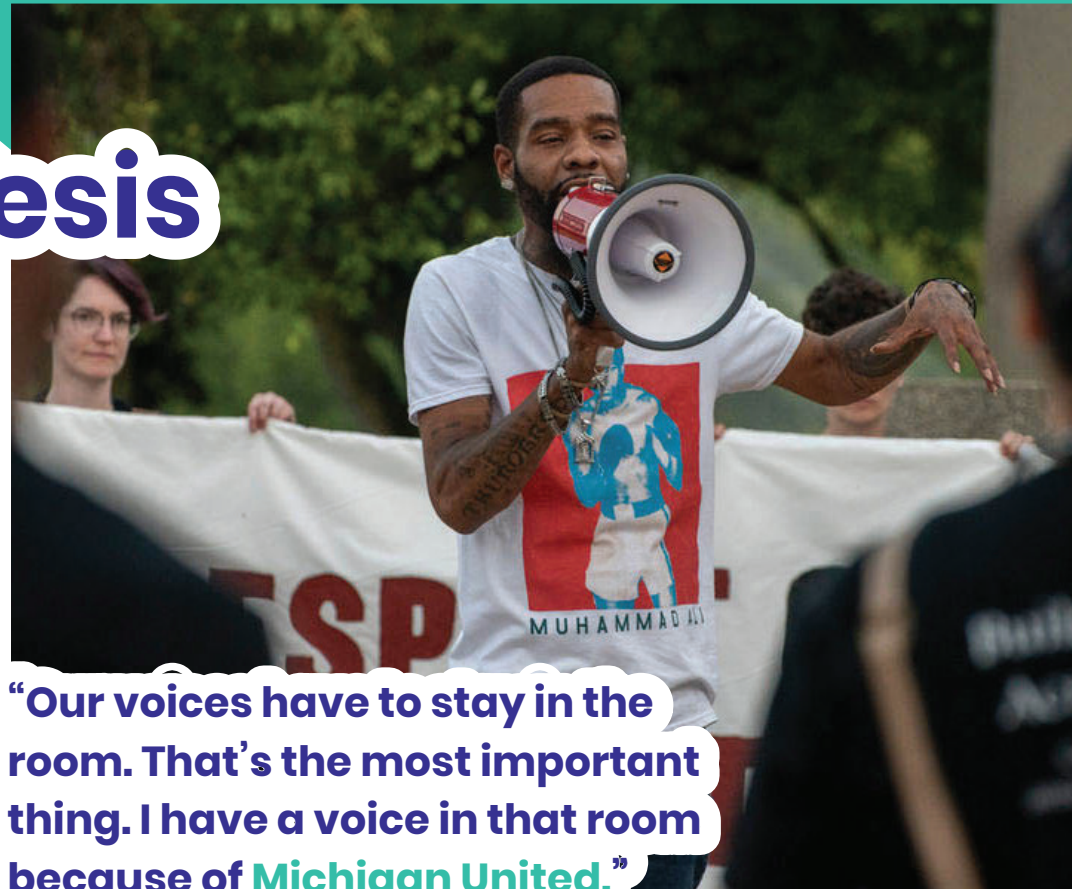


Member Spotlight

Ed Genesis

Ed Genesis was born and raised in Gary, Indiana, in a poor neighborhood, just 30 miles from Chicago. His father was a victim of police brutality, murdered by an undercover police officer, leaving his mother to raise three children alone. In his teen years, Ed quickly fell into the traps laid in neighborhoods beset by poverty and racism.

“Our voices have to stay in the room. That’s the most important thing. I have a voice in that room because of Michigan United.”



He began running with the wrong crowd and was expelled from high school. Desperate to put Ed back on the right track, his mother packed up the kids and moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Even in a new city with more opportunities, Ed still struggled. By the age of 17 he had acquired his first felony charge and the pattern continued for several years. Ed dropped out of every school he enrolled in and picked up two additional felonies along the way. Despite the trouble Ed found himself in, he had a passion for two things: music and giving back to his community.

While handing out pizza and popsicles after a show, Ed was approached by a Michigan United organizer who commended him for being positively engaged his community and neighbors. The two struck up conversation and the Michigan United organizer asked if Ed was aware of the systems of mass incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline.

“Two-thirds of the people I know in Kalamazoo have felonies and one-third have been to prison. I hadn’t heard those terms, but I’ve lived them enough to know exactly what the organizer meant,” Ed explained.

It’s been four years since Ed was approached by that Michigan United organizer and he hasn’t looked back since. Now, Ed is a Criminal Justice

Reform Organizer with Michigan United and more politically active than ever before. He cast his first vote and continues to canvass for issues and candidates in West Michigan.

Recently, Ed worked with Michigan United organizers and the Kalamazoo Police Department to remove “no stopping, no standing, no parking” signs which were placed in predominantly black neighborhoods. The signs were ostensibly put up to deter crack sales in the ‘90s, but were being used to needlessly criminalize normal activity in the neighborhood — including Ed’s.

With the help of the Michigan United team, Ed conducted listening sessions and leadership trainings in the neighborhood, and then brought residents to meet with city officials. Ed’s successful campaign led to the city of Kalamazoo removing all of the “no stopping, no standing, no parking” signs.

“Now, I’m not a victim like once upon a time. It’s just important that we have a voice in the room, and when I say a voice, I mean the most directly impacted. I’m a three-time felon, but I’m also a husband, a father....it just means a lot to have a say. Our voices have to stay in the room. That’s the most important thing. I have a voice in that room because of Michigan United.”

State Representative Laurie Pohutsky

Member Spotlight

Laurie Pohutsky was speaking on a panel at the University of Michigan-Dearborn about getting involved in politics when she was approached by another panelist who suggested she attend a Michigan United meeting.



The very next day, with no established point of contact or relationships at Michigan United, Laurie showed up to the meeting and was hooked. From that day on, Laurie was drawn to Michigan United’s mission of justice and dignity, and became deeply involved in the co-governing strategy, specifically working with the Caring Majority team to advocate for long-term care funding.

In early 2018, Laurie was recruited to attend the Movement Politics Academy, a 33-hour leadership training program for candidates, campaign staff and activists, launched in part by Michigan People’s Campaign. That same year, Laurie was elected

to serve Michigan’s 19th House District, flipping a historically Republican district with a bold, progressive agenda. Representative Pohutsky credits Michigan United and Michigan People’s Campaign for giving her the tools to run for office — and win.

“Michigan People’s Campaign has put its values and mission into action in the political sphere, and help people like me run for office on those values. I wouldn’t have been as effective a campaigner without working with them.”

Within the first month of taking office, Rep. Pohutsky saw action on long-term care come to fruition right before her eyes. It was incredible to

see the months of hard work, meetings, and actions all come together, and she credits Michigan United’s ability to bring their issues to the forefront across the state and create clear plans on how to tackle them.

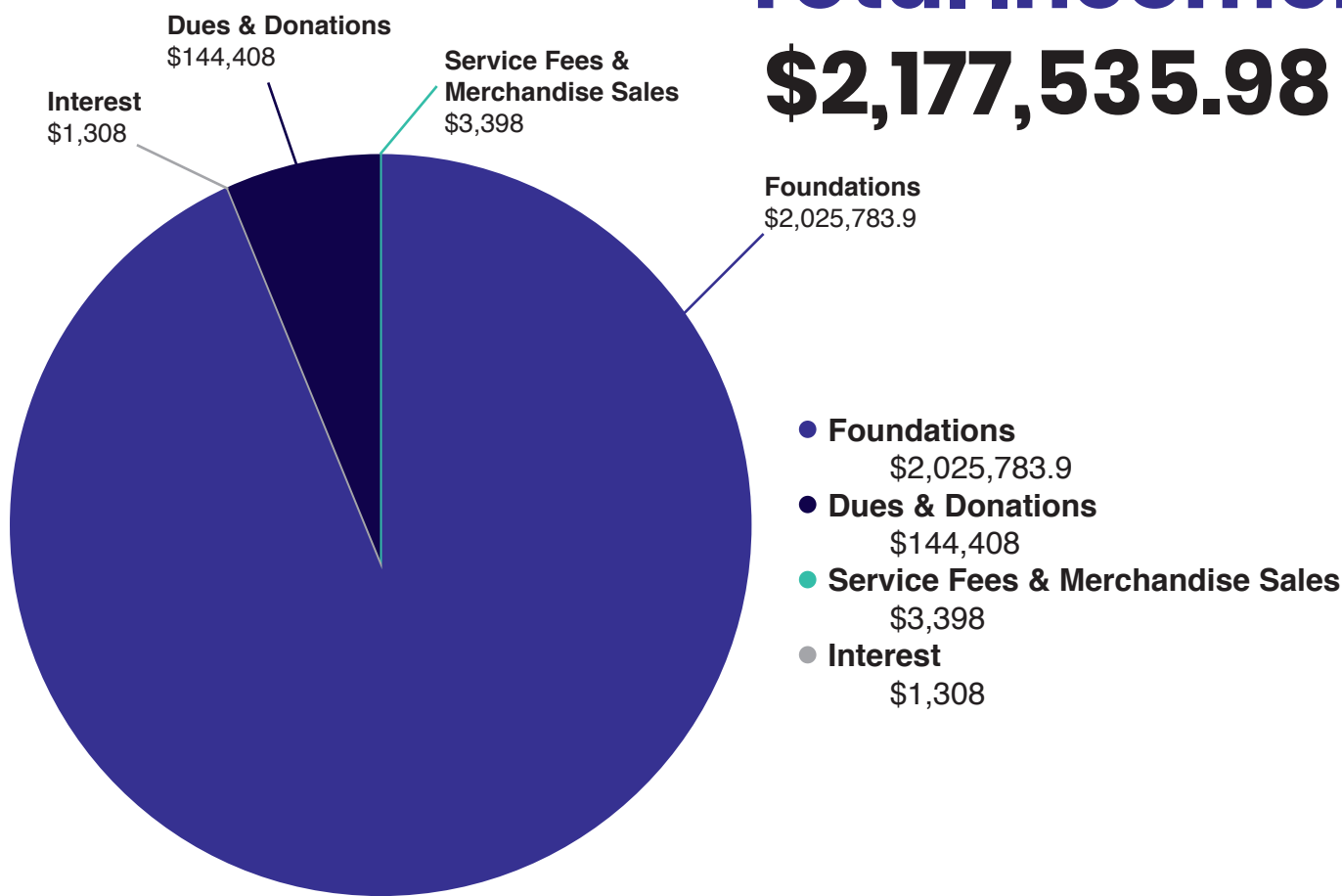
“The great thing about Michigan United is that they have lofty goals, and they have a plan to reach those goals. It’s unique. They’re so inclusive. They make sure people really have a voice and a say.”

Now, three months into her first term, Rep. Pohutsky is a member of the Caring Majority Caucus and eager to continue advocating for long-term care among her colleagues in the Michigan Legislature.

“The great thing about Michigan United is that they have lofty goals, and they have a plan to reach those goals. It’s unique. They’re so inclusive. They make sure people really have a voice and a say.”

Financial Summary and Metrics

Total Income:
\$2,177,535.98



Door Attempts
22,419

Voter Registration
185

Non-Partisan Voter Forums
10

Public Events Held
140
with 15,129 participants

Meetings with Elected Officials or Candidates
103
with 745 participants

Leadership Trainings Held
80
with 1,039 participants

Public Education Sessions
160
with 25,000 participants



michigan
united 

JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

Michigan United
4405 Wesson Street
Detroit, MI 48210
1-877-507-7774
miunited.org