POWERSFUL IMPACT

GET OUT & VOTE

POWER COALITION
For Equity and Justice
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Together, we took a momentous step forward in our fight to build a historic movement for progressive change in Louisiana, and we now have more opportunities than ever before to move our state forward. You all made that possible.

Voters of color turned out in record numbers in 2019, which is a testament to everyone involved in the Power Voter campaign. We are deeply grateful for your work and wanted you to know the true depth and impact of what you accomplished. But the real ‘thank you’ will come as we continue to build a Louisiana that honors and uplifts all of its people, regardless of race, economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, incarceration status, or any of the numerous other factors that have traditionally kept marginalized populations voiceless in our state.

As we continue our work into 2020 and beyond, we hope that you’ll fight shoulder-to-shoulder with us to make Louisiana an example of how grassroots movements led by people of color can transform our state, our country, and our world.

THANK YOU LOUISIANA!

Thank you to all of our partner organizations, canvassers, volunteers, donors, and the hundreds of thousands of people we engaged with who turned out to vote during the 2019 election cycle.

Together, we took a momentous step forward in our fight to build a historic movement for progressive change in Louisiana, and we now have more opportunities than ever before to move our state forward. You all made that possible.

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Dedication

This report, and the work we will do going forward, are dedicated to the memory of Angel Robinson, who tragically passed away on January 23, 2020. Angel was a cherished friend and mentor to our team, and her design and web development work were invaluable to the Power Voter campaign.

Angel was beloved by all who knew her. She was a brilliant writer, had an exceptional eye for design, and was an intrepid business woman. She always had the Power Coalition’s back and made sure everything she worked on was done to perfection. Her extraordinary work was noticed by everyone who has seen our website and our materials. Her vision, brilliance, and compassion helped shape our organization. She will be dearly missed, and her passing created a hole that we will never be able to fill. Thank you Angel and we will carry on your legacy through our work. You will live in our hearts, and in the work of the Power Coalition, forever and always.
Building Voice and Power

In 2015, Ashley K. Shelton established the Power Coalition for Equity & Justice with the aim of building a progressive grassroots movement in Louisiana that was led by and for people of color. While the dream was big, the reality of building that kind of a movement in a conservative state was extraordinarily daunting. Now, five years later, the Power Coalition and its partner organizations have changed the trajectory of the state in ways few could have imagined.

The Power Coalition’s many successes over our first five years all built toward our civic engagement campaign—aka, the Power Voter campaign—during the 2019 Louisiana statewide election season. As we have been doing since our inception, we focused on engaging with infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color in order to expand their voice and power in Louisiana’s political process. That work paid off, as voters of color turned out at historic rates in 2019.

Key Data & Takeaways

Turnout among voters of color was historically high during the 2019 election season, especially for the Runoff.

We engaged with 465,406 infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color. 278,399 (59.8%) of those people voted.

To reach those 465,406 people, we made 1,273,213 total contact attempts:
- 385,286 doors knocked
- 308,620 phone calls
- 579,307 text messages

342,994 more total votes were cast in the 2019 Runoff than in the 2015 Runoff, and voters of color accounted for 136,070 (39.7%) of those votes.

Nearly 50% of all registered voters of color voted in November (total voter turnout was 51%).

Voters of color accounted for 34.5% of the total votes cast in the Runoff, which is a record for modern Louisiana elections (surpassing the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections).

To 165,303 more total votes were cast in the Runoff than in the Primary, and voters of color accounted for 102,835 (62.2%) of those votes.

Shifting the Narrative

When members of the media describe turnout among voters of color they often use proportional turnout percentages. For instance, many journalists will say that Black voters accounted for 30.8% of all the votes cast in an election. That proportional number is difficult for many people to grasp, it undervalues actual turnout by using a smaller number, and it’s much less likely to be used to describe white voter turnout.

The reality is that more than 50% of all registered Black voters turned out for the Runoff, which was roughly on par with registered white voter turnout. Narrative is important in valuing everyone’s voice, which is why we try to provide a full and nuanced view of the data in this report.
Our Campaign

The Power Voter campaign truly went statewide. We had seven field offices--New Orleans (East Bank), Orleans and Jefferson Parishes (West Bank), Houma/Thibodaux, East Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Alexandria, and Shreveport--covering almost every corner of Louisiana. And while candidates, political parties and outside interest groups spent nearly $100 million on Louisiana’s elections during the 2019 cycle, we were able to forge deep, lasting relationships with hundreds of thousands of people--and turn them out to vote--for 1 percent of the overall dollars spent in the election.

The key to that efficiency was our grassroots approach where we:

- Partnered with dozens of grassroots organizations and organizers
- Hired 324 door-to-door canvassers
- Paid all of our staff $15 an hour
- Recruited more than 400 volunteers who put in thousands of hours of work
- Hosted or co-hosted more than two dozen community events
- Stationed more than 60 election protection monitors at polling places all over Louisiana
The People’s Agenda

1. Expand economic opportunity
2. Continued and sustained criminal justice reform
3. Prioritize fiscal fairness
4. Ensure fair, equitable electoral districts

BUILDING POWER for Equity and Justice

For the past five years, the Power Coalition and our partner organizations have been continually touring Louisiana and hosting community listening sessions where we engage with, listen to, and learn from the people of our state, particularly people of color. Those experiences have shaped our People’s Agenda, our community organizing work, and our approach to solving the persistent problems that plague our state.

We’ve also spent the past five years directly engaging with infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color, unregistered and newly registered voters, and others who have often been on the outside of the political process, as part of our campaign to build a movement for a more expansive and effective democracy in Louisiana. During the 2019 statewide elections, that voter and civic engagement work had an enormous impact. More than 50 percent of registered Black voters turned out to vote, including nearly 60 percent of the roughly 465,000 voters who we engaged.

Beyond our success in 2019, we’ve won several other important victories, including working with our partner organization, Voice of the Experienced (VOTE), to lead the successful campaign to pass Amendment 2 in 2018, which eliminated non-unanimous jury verdicts in Louisiana. We also helped drive voter turnout in municipal races in New Orleans, Alexandria, and Shreveport, and we’ve been a force for legislative action at the local and state levels.

Now we need to build on those victories and continue to grow this movement. As we go forward in that movement-building work, we will always be guided a commitment to these shared principles:

1. The people closest to the problem are closest to the solution: Those who are directly affected by harmful policies and inequitable systems should lead the movement for change.

2. Government should be accountable to citizens for its actions: Louisiana is at its best when it fulfills its Constitution’s promise to “secure justice for all, preserve peace, protect the rights, and promote the happiness and general welfare of the people.”

3. Intersectionality is mandatory in political advocacy: Power is built by working together across issue and policy areas, and constructing a shared frame for advocacy with one voice.

We have always centered people of color in every facet of our work, and will continue to do so, not only because of our moral obligation to equity and justice, but because, as an organization that is led and almost entirely staffed by Black women, we understand that furthering equity and justice for communities of color in Louisiana is more than a talking point; it has a very real impact on people’s lives, and can be transformative for our communities.
The increase in voter turnout from the 2015 Runoff to the 2019 Runoff was disproportionately driven by voters of color, particularly Black voters.

**Overall IMPACT**

We made 1,273,213 total contact attempts to engage with 465,406 infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color. Of those 465,406 people:

- **278,399** (59.8%) voted in the Primary and/or Runoff
- **185,674** (39.9%) voted in both the Primary and Runoff

Approximately one-third of the total votes cast in the 2019 Runoff (~500,000 of ~1.5 million) came during Early Voting week (November 2-9).

**2019 Runoff to 2019 Primary Vote Comparison**

165,303 more total votes were cast in the Runoff than in the Primary, and voters of color accounted for 102,835 (62.2%) of those votes.

- **Black Voters**: 93,637 (62.2%)
- **Other Voters**: 9,198 (6.2%)

Approximately one-third of the total votes cast in the 2019 Runoff (

**2019 to 2015 Total Vote Comparison**

- **2015**: 342,994
- **2019**: 705,410

- **342,994** more voters

Black voters cast 114,876 (33.5%) of those additional votes, while making up 31% of total registered voters in Louisiana.

‘Other’ voters cast 21,194 (6.2%) of those additional votes, while making up 4.6% of total registered voters in Louisiana.

**33.5% of the difference was made up by BLACK VOTERS**

**6.2% of the difference was made up by OTHER VOTERS OF COLOR**
The Power Voter campaign truly went statewide. We had seven field offices--New Orleans (East Bank), Orleans and Jefferson Parishes (West Bank), Houma/Thibodaux, East Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Alexandria, and Shreveport--covering almost every corner of Louisiana. And while candidates, political parties, and outside interest groups spent nearly $100 million on Louisiana elections during the 2019 cycle, we were able to forge deep, lasting relationships with hundreds of thousands of people--and turn them out to vote--for 1 percent of the overall dollars spent in the election.

### How We GOT IT DONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnered with dozens of grassroots organizations and organizers:</th>
<th>Paid our canvassers</th>
<th>Hosted or co-hosted more than two dozen community events, including listening sessions, candidate forums, luncheons, and gatherings of religious and social organizations.</th>
<th>Trained and stationed more than 60 election protection monitors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Executive Committee member organizations led robust field operations, and we supported a variety of other groups and individuals through funding, data sharing, and increased organizational capacity.</td>
<td>$15 an hour because we wanted to live our values by paying a living wage.</td>
<td>Hired a total of 324 door-to-door canvassers</td>
<td>at polling places all over Louisiana to help ensure that everyone had access to the ballot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited more than 400 volunteers who put in thousands of hours of work</td>
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The key to that efficiency was our grassroots approach, where we:
Power Voters

We very intentionally designed a messaging campaign that would help draw more people into the political process by laying out avenues they could use to increase their voice and power in the decisions that shape their lives. Our campaign’s title was “Power Voter” because we wanted people to understand that civic engagement is about more than voting in one election. **We asked voters to 1) Vote in every election, 2) Hold their elected officials accountable, and 3) Take part in the 2020 U.S. Census.**

It’s important to note that we “asked” voters to do these things, we didn’t “tell” them. Too often, politicians and political parties tell voters of all colors, but especially Black and Brown voters, what to do. This kind of demanding approach is rarely effective, and certainly doesn’t serve as a foundation for long-term civic engagement.

Getting people to join the political process isn’t easy, and it requires doing the deep, hard work of asking people about their lives, what they care about, why those things are important to them, and how they want those issues to be addressed. So when we began our campaign **we focused on having meaningful conversations with people,** because we needed to learn from them, and they needed to learn they could trust us. We continued to deepen those relationships throughout the campaign.

While that civic engagement outreach was key to building trust in community, we realized that our messaging needed to change as the election season unfolded. After the Primary, we transitioned to messaging that centered the issues people told us were important to them, including health care, criminal justice reform, education, equal opportunity, living wages, and infrastructure. Not surprisingly, the issues people lifted up during this election season align with our People’s Agenda, which we developed based on feedback we received during five years of community listening sessions all over Louisiana.

Just as importantly, **we significantly ramped up our emphasis on the urgency and necessity of voting.** Turnout among voters of color in the 2019 Primary was far higher than it was in the 2015 Primary, yet the media often framed the narrative in a way that seemed to disparage Black voter turnout rates in particular (i.e., ignoring that it was a big leap compared to 2015).

We understood that whatever the outcome in the 2019 Runoff, turnout among voters of color, and especially Black voters, was going to be the core narrative, for good or ill. With that in mind, we doubled down on our determination to help voters of color understand just how incredibly important they are to the future of Louisiana. Our ultimate success in that goal was due, in large part, to the civic engagement, outreach, and trust-building work we’d been doing in communities for months.

In the end, the Power Voter campaign was incredibly successful in engaging and turning out voters of color, especially Black voters. More than 50% of all registered Black voters made their voices heard in the ballot booth. And, at 30.8% of all votes cast, Black voter turnout in the 2019 Runoff was higher, as a proportion of the total votes cast, than it’s been for any election in modern Louisiana history.
The success of the Power Voter campaign was a testament to our strong coalition, many of whom took the lead in several regions throughout the state. Our anchor partners, who make up our Executive Committee and constitute some of the most powerful community organizing groups in the South, played key roles in the Power Voter campaign. They include:

Beyond those core Executive Committee partners, we extended our reach to work with several new groups and successfully move a wide range of organizing strategies. Those groups include:

- Louisiana Pan-Hellenic Council
- Churches and religious institutions
- Neighborhood Associations

**Partners**
Partner Case Study: Black Voters Matter

Telling all of the stories of how these partnerships came together, and their wide-ranging impact on the election’s outcome, would require a book onto itself. But our collaboration with Black Voters Matter serves as a case study.

Black Voters Matter made a big investment in Louisiana and worked with us to ensure that we engaged voters in rural areas across the state.

BVM brought their world famous “Blackest Bus in America” to Louisiana and shared valuable experiences from their campaigns in other states. They served as a constant sounding board for our ideas, traveled across the state engaging voters, and were responsible for some of the most memorable experiences of the campaign.

Souls to the Polls

Among the many ways we partnered with faith leaders and organizations, our Souls to the Polls initiative was one of the most successful, particularly during Early Voting Week (November 2-9). **Voters of color accounted for nearly 40% of the votes cast during Early Voting**, which set the tone for a huge overall leap in turnout.

Churches all over the state served as staging locations for rides to the polls during Early Voting Week, and religious leaders of all denominations used their pulpits to talk to their parishioners about the importance of voting.

Growing our organizing relationships with the faith community was one of our most important takeaways from the campaign. Faith communities are pivotal elements of almost every community where we work, and creating pathways for religious groups to get more involved in our advocacy efforts in the future will be key to our ability to grow and thrive as communities and as a state.
Engaging with hundreds of thousands of people is no easy feat. It requires a big team of people with shared values who believe in a cause. And that team needs to be ready to work hard pounding the pavement, knocking on doors, and making phone calls.

Over the course of the Power Voter campaign, we employed nearly 400 people and paid them all at least $15 an hour. Our 324 canvassers knocked on 385,286 doors. Our team of paid and volunteer phone bankers, led by Cassandra Henderson, made 308,620 calls. Those are massive numbers, and their impact on the outcome of the election can’t be denied.

Every member of our team was valued, not just for the work they did but for the heart and passion they brought with them every day. Their energy powered us through from start to finish, serving as the backbone of our operation. We are eternally grateful for all of their hard work. We will cherish so many experiences from this campaign, but forging deeper relationships with hundreds of these incredible organizers and activists is right at the top of the list.

Volunteers are an important part of the work we do. We had the pleasure of working with more than 400 volunteers statewide, including neighborhood leaders, clergy, students and faculty from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, teachers, parents, and so many young people.

Without this volunteer force, we never would have been able to reach hundreds of thousands of voters and do it with such a high level of energy. Our volunteers ranged in age from 15-85, and they all brought a lively presence that could be felt in our offices, in the community, over the phone, and even via text message.

Special acknowledgement goes to Dillard University, Xavier University, Southern University, and Benjamin Franklin High School, whose students turned out in a big way to help us get the word, and the vote, out.

We can’t wait to work with our next crop of volunteers as we gear up for Census outreach, Louisiana’s 2020 legislative session, and then local, state, and federal elections later in the year.
Engaging with young voters is the North Star for most campaigns, and it certainly was one of our top goals. For an organization that centers people of color, that meant working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

We hired a college organizer out of Dillard University to help us design and implement college outreach strategies, kept in constant contact with students and faculty at Xavier University and the Southern University campuses in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Shreveport, and worked with on-campus organizations to support their events and drive turnout during Early Voting and on both Election Days.

While HBCUs were our primary focus, we also forged connections with as many students and campuses as we could. We offered rides to the polls at LSU’s campuses in Baton Rouge and Shreveport, presented our Power Voter campaign at various student organizing events around Louisiana, and sponsored voter registration events on campuses and at concerts and other live events.
Any civic engagement campaign is only as good as the tools you provide to people so they can make more informed choices in the voting booth. To that end, we partnered with Invest Louisiana to create the state’s first progressive legislative scorecard, where we scored legislators on how they voted on 15 priority bills during the 2015-2019 legislative session. We also created a voter guide to give people a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the offices they would see on their ballots.

Voters often don’t have access to enough information about the people who are running for office, which is why we asked every candidate for state legislative office to respond to a candidate survey. We also partnered with Fair Districts Louisiana to develop a fair and equitable redistricting pledge, which we asked every prospective legislator to sign.

The survey asked candidates about their positions on issues like minimum wage, school lunch shaming, and the state’s Industrial Tax Exemption Program, among others. The redistricting pledge was both a way to get legislators to pledge their support for a fair, equitable, and transparent redistricting process, and to educate those legislators about linchpin ideals regarding the redistricting process. As we received responses from prospective legislators, we posted them on our website and turned them into materials that we passed out on doors and during events.
In order to ensure that every voter’s rights were protected, we partnered with Election Protection—a nonpartisan coalition of more than 150 national, state, and local partners, including the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund (LDF), VOTE, and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

All of these partners played a pivotal role in educating and training volunteers for the program. They led training sessions focused on voter protection at polling sites and education around litigation on key voting rights issues. To supplement our live trainings, we developed a statewide digital and print campaign that featured webinars and informational material.

In Baton Rouge and New Orleans alone, we recruited more than 60 volunteers to run the election protection hotline, support field operations, and give rides to the polls on Election Day. Volunteer poll monitors answered questions about voting and gathered information to report on issues in real-time with the help of legal advocates and experts through the Election Protection ‘866-OUR-VOTE’ hotline.

Volunteers worked hard to resolve several issues, including polling location signage, access for disabled people, parking, and technical issues with the Secretary of State’s Voter Portal. The most pervasive problems we addressed centered on confusion and lack of guidance among poll workers, parish officials, and the Secretary of State’s Office. There was sometimes a lack of clarity among those parties about electioneering laws and regulations regarding nonpartisan poll monitors. Moving forward, we will work with our partners to ensure that all issues are resolved, and continue to focus on a fair voting process.
The numbers below are raw totals and turnout percentages (in parentheses), with comparisons made between the previous statewide elections, which took place in 2015, as well as the 2019 Primary (October 12) and 2019 Runoff (November 16).

Black voter turnout was 50.2% in 2019 (Roughly on par with white voter turnout)
We focused our outreach universe on infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color, as well as newly registered voters of color, and attempted to reach each one of those voters five times (i.e., five total contacts, or “touches,” for each person, including combined door knocks, phone calls, and text messages). This is a population we have been communicating with for the past five years, and our data has shown that four-to-five touches is the optimal number for full messaging and engagement penetration.

The numbers below represent every point of data we were able to collect during the 2019 election cycle. However, there were thousands of uncounted voter contacts, including those made at community events that we hosted or co-hosted, as well as through some of our partnerships where those partners were unable to collect data. While our internal data shows a total of 1,273,213 voter contact attempts, it is safe to say that we made more than 1.3 million total attempts statewide during the 2019 election cycle.

We kicked off the direct voter outreach aspect of our Power Voter campaign on August 24. Below are data about the direct impact our engagement efforts had on the 2019 elections.

### 2019 Election by the Numbers

**POWER COALITION IMPACT**

- We made 1,273,213 total contact attempts to reach those 465,406 people, with a breakdown of:
  - 278,399 (59.8%) voted
  - 385,286 doors knocked
  - 256,620 phone calls
  - 579,307 text messages
  - 308,620 phone calls
  - 579,307 text messages

- 385,286 doors knocked
- 308,620 phone calls
- 579,307 text messages

Between August 24 and the Runoff (November 16), we built a universe of 465,406* infrequent and semi-frequent voters of color who we wanted to reach.

- 278,399 (59.8%) of them voted
- 185,674 (39.9%) of them voted in both the Primary and Runoff
Runoff IMPACT

Between the day after the Primary (October 13) and the Runoff (November 16), our voter universe consisted of 395,032 total voters of color. 229,956 (58.2%) of them voted

We made 529,780 total contact attempts to reach those 395,032 people, with a breakdown of:

- 155,130 doors knocked
- 84,849 phone calls
- 289,801 text messages

Primary IMPACT

Between August 24 and the Primary (October 12), our voter universe consisted of 387,272 voters of color. 140,196 (36.2%) of them voted

We made 743,433 total contact attempts to reach those 387,272 people, with a breakdown of:

- 230,156 doors knocked
- 223,771 phone calls
- 289,506 text messages

*As our campaign strategies shifted, so did our target universe, which is why there are different voter numbers for total universe, Runoff universe, and Primary universe.*
Our Work Going Forward

Coming out of the Power Voter campaign, it’s time to turn our attention to our 2020 priorities, including the 2020 U.S. Census, Louisiana state legislative session, District Attorney, municipal, and federal elections in the fall, and our continued work organizing in communities of color. Guided by our People’s Agenda, we will work to hold our elected officials accountable at all levels of government and ensure that they are truly working for the people of Louisiana.

To accomplish these goals, we will use the Power Voter campaign as a foundation to continue building people power and momentum toward a more equitable and just Louisiana. We will advocate for accountability using many of the tools we’ve already created—e.g., our progressive report card, candidate survey, and fair and equitable redistricting pledge—building on them, and using those tools to drive change.

During the 2020 state legislative session we will continue our work to raise the minimum wage and/or give local governments the freedom to set their own wage floors, and we will continue our work to dismantle Louisiana’s user-pay criminal legal system, which plays a major role in keeping the people of this state trapped in poverty, especially people of color. We’ll also be supporting our partners on important issues like early childhood development, ending the death penalty and solitary confinement, reducing or eliminating habitual offender laws, and environmental and coastal protection.

Redistricting has always been our North Star because it is the clearest pathway to power for people of color in our state, which is why we will be bringing a package of bills to the legislature this year that are designed to improve fairness, equitability, and transparency in the redistricting process.

While we prepare for the 2020 legislative session, we’ll simultaneously be moving a statewide Census strategy, called Count Me In, with the goal of ensuring that every person of color in the state is counted. Louisiana has many hard-to-count communities, and that’s especially true of low-income communities of color. Ensuring a full count means ensuring that our communities receive the resources (federal dollars) and political representation (redistricting is based on the Census count) they need to have real voice and power in our state.

Together with our partners, we have been successfully growing our work and building lasting statewide infrastructure that continues to move the needle on the persistent systems that drive poverty and inequity in Louisiana. Our work in 2018 on the Unanimous Jury Coalition was a foundational campaign, which we built upon for our 2019 statewide work. There was so much momentum and success in 2019 that we must continue to engage voters in 2020.
We are deeply appreciative of Crossroads Campaigns, who helped us build this campaign out from day one, and then shepherded us all the way through to Election Day. Without their expertise, strategic support, and trouble-shooting, the Power Voter campaign would not have been such a success.

State Voices, a national, non-profit civic engagement organization, has been a true friend and partner to the Power Coalition for many years now. Their help in developing our data operation has allowed us to continually refine and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our campaigns and operations across the board.

We partnered with all seven members of the New Orleans City Council, along with Jennifer Walner, Danah Fisher, and their community of supporters, and Eloop Travel Inc. to offer rides to the polls during Early Voting Week. We are thankful to all of them for their help. We also want to thank Rhodes funeral home, especially Joan Rhodes and Kathleen Rhodes Astorga, who volunteered to give rides to the polls up until the last hour of Election Day.

Our appreciation also goes out to all of the donors and foundations who provided support for our work in 2019. In particular, we need to recognize Norris Henderson, Laura Livoti, Willa Conway, and Billy Waterson for providing critical dollars that helped push the campaign across the finish line. None of what we accomplished would have been possible without your generosity and belief that Louisiana matters.