

Not your daddy's registration drive

SC's Missing Voter Project isn't about parties or politicians, it's about a racist election system.

The **Missing Voter Project** was launched in 2004 to reach and mobilize new and infrequent voters in South Carolina.

MISSING VOTER PROJECT

Unlike other voter registration drives, the MVP is nonpartisan, ongoing, and focused on historically under-represented communities.

It was created by the SC Progressive Network to grow an informed electorate with the power to mobilize around public policies critical to young people, working families, and communities of color in South Carolina.

Our goal is to engage voters who have lost faith in a system that does not work for them.

Everyone knows the game is rigged. The key is to vote smart.

This year, the MVP continues the novel peer-driven approach of asking young, Black voters to reach young, registered, Black non-voters and get them to the polls.

Just 10% of South Carolina's 124,000 Black voters under age 26 went to the polls in the last general election. Those voters are central to our future MVP campaigns.

Over the summer of 2020, MVP organizers targeted Saluda and Fairfield, taking advantage of the relationships the Network has built in those counties over the 26 years it has been organizing.

This year, we are raising funds to recruit county-based MVP teams from the 12,450 young Black South Carolinians who voted in the last general election. We will challenge them to be the catalyst to turn out record numbers of young, Black voters in 2024 and 2026. They have the numbers to change history.



Whether or not the MVP succeeds in that goal this year, we are laying the groundwork for a multi-year plan to level the imbalance of power codified in the state's current constitution, created in 1895 specifically to disenfranchise its African-American citizens.

A reckoning is upon us.

These are perilous times, to be sure, but they offer an unprecedented opportunity to challenge, and begin to dismantle, South Carolina's racially segregated politics.

What we do between now and the midterm election on Nov. 9, 2026 can change our lives for many years to come. ▼

"I want to begin an era of change in my community."

**Mysia Wynn-Robinson
Fairfield County MVP**

An historic turnout of SC's Black voters in 2024 can show what is possible with a united strategy

While 78% of South Carolina's nonwhite voting-age population is registered, only half of them regularly vote. An average of 500,000 of the state's 1.1 million registered Blacks (along with 100,000 unregistered Black citizens), are sitting out the elections. If those "missing voters" were mobilized, it could change everything.

The continuing racial disparities in jobs, housing, health care, poverty, education, and the criminal justice system show that Black lives are devalued in South Carolina. It is not an accident, and it is a problem that won't fix itself.



political districts. This creates safe seats for Black incumbents but dilutes the effectiveness of Black votes on state policies.

Connecting the political dots, joining activist forces

The MVP is working to motivate and sustain Black civic engagement by showing that we can increase the turnout of Black voters by 250,000+ in the only political district that cannot be gerrymandered: a statewide race.

The average margin of victory in the last 16 years of midterm elections for governor, attorney general and the superintendent of education was only 142,000 votes. If our plan works, it would prove to the half-million Black regis-



Former Fairfield County Councilman Kamau Marcharia (left) was an early MVP organizer.

Reality check: for decades, incumbent legislators have been allowed to carve political maps to retain their power by packing Black and White voters into racially segregated



tered nonvoters that if political districts were not racially segregated their vote could change public policy.

By 2026, an energized Black electorate in South Carolina could determine the state's next governor, attorney general, and superintendent of education.

The 2024 MVP training will prepare activists to organize county-based petitions to force a constitutional amendment on the 2026 ballot to end race-based redistricting.

It is part of the Network's Fair Maps campaign to end partisan gerrymandering in South Carolina. See FairMapsSC.com for details.

This year's MVP campaign is designed to train and sustain county-based teams of activists who understand that to make meaningful change will take commitment and longterm vision. Emerging new Black leadership will be identified and sustained.

Training includes a component to involve MVP organizers in the statewide election protection work that the Network has anchored since 2004, when the nation's first paperless voting system was implemented.

MVP volunteers will meet their county's election director, become credentialed poll observers, and have the opportunity to participate in their county's vote certification process.

In 2020, we partnered with the new leadership of the NAACP State Conference to test the MVP as an effec-



tive statewide project. The Memorandum of Understanding was enthusiastically endorsed by the national NAACP office. The plan set our two-county model in place. As the pandemic worsened, we adjusted recruiting, training, and mobilization strategies to keep organizers and the public safe.

We mailed a letter to young Black voters who voted in our two targeted counties — Saluda and Fairfield — inviting them to join their county MVP team.

It took until 2018 for majority-Black Fairfield County to elect its first Black state representative since Reconstruction.

Ten years earlier, the MVP conducted its first student training at the only high school in Fairfield County. The team registered three times as many new voters than had previously voted. At almost 25%, the county now has the state’s second-highest youth participation rate.

Saluda County is majority-White, and had just 65 young, Black voters in 2018. For decades, the Network has worked with the Riverside CDC, the only enduring civic engagement organization in the county. It prepared us for this campaign.

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Young voters matter

The MVP mailed this personalized letter to every Black citizen under 26 in Fairfield and Saluda counties who voted in 2018. We want to do this statewide in 2024.

Dear [first name],

Not only do Black lives matter, they can change history. It begins now, and starts with you.

Just 12% of young Black South Carolinians went to the polls in 2018. We are writing to thank you for being one of them. We appreciate so much that you voted — but this year voting is not enough.

We are asking you to step up your game and help mobilize your friends, family, and neighbors for the coming election on Nov. 3. With your help, we can turn out a record number of Black voters, and reclaim the political power that is your birthright.

The country is in crisis. What we do between now and the 2020 election will shape our lives for years to come. Let’s use this critical moment to engage in our communities like never before, and begin to create the future we deserve.

Please join the SC Progressive Network and NAACP branches in a nonpartisan campaign called the Missing Voter Project, which for 16 years has been educating, registering and mobilizing voters across the state.

We know that our election system is rigged. It is driven by money and designed by lawmakers to segregate people of color into political districts to dilute their voting power. Our goal is to empower marginalized communities while teaching them about the systemic problems that require long-term vision and commitment to change.

Please consider becoming a MVP organizer. You will get free tools and the support you need to mobilize voters in your community. We will train you on your cell phone or computer on how to use safe, online methods of voter education, registration, and mobilization.

These are extraordinary times. Let them move you to action!

Can you help?

MVP poised to expand statewide

The level of capacity in this rural county with poor broadband service is requiring a different organizing model than in Fairfield. The differences between the two inform how we are conducting MVP outreach in other counties.

In Saluda and Fairfield counties, the NAACP Branch has partnered with local Network members to support the MVP teams. With the help of county Branches, we are soliciting community buy-in to help sustain core teams of local activists beyond 2024. We will pay a stipend to trained young organizers. The more money we raise, the more boots we can put on the ground in more counties.

Across the state a vibrant organizing core

got off course — and how we can remake it to be more equitable for a new generation.

Young activists are excited about leading such a bold and hopeful plan that challenges the status-quo and agrees with the non-voting that their vote doesn't count – unless they learn how to make it count. Their first round of calls will be to their registered, but not voting friends they went to school with.

When that list is finished, they will begin calling unregistered voters their age to tell them about this great plan to kick the ass of the ruling class and reconstruct democracy. This growing cadre of true Drum Majors for Justice will then start cracking on their brothers, sisters, parents and grandparents that gave up on voting. The MVP will provide names and addresses.

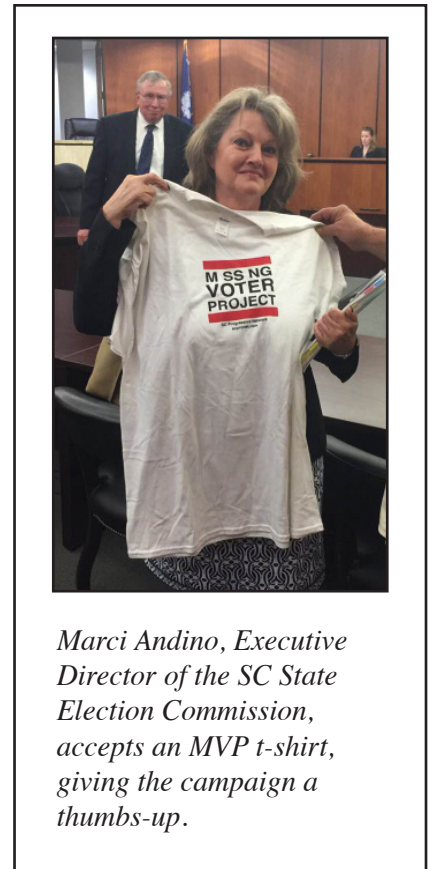
In 2024, we intend to target as many counties as we have the capacity to serve with paid organizers who are emerging leaders. We will engage all 46 NAACP branches as well as the states HBCUs.

In 2023, out of the state's 123,892 Black citizens, 18-24, 63% were registered, but only 10% – 12,450 – voted. They are the MVP's vanguard and we have their names and addresses.

2024's voter education and mobilization needs to be driven by the accepted reality that our political system, where 85% of campaign money comes from



is taking root. Word is getting out that something is happening that is shovel ready for these dangerous times. Civic, labor and faith organizations are signing up to use the MVP training for their membership. It includes a short course on democracy and a brief but critical history lesson that explains how our democracy



Marci Andino, Executive Director of the SC State Election Commission, accepts an MVP t-shirt, giving the campaign a thumbs-up.

corporations, does not operate in the interest of working people, especially women and people of color.

In a state where the white-majority-party's gerrymandering has reduced Black votes to 3/5th the weight of white votes, passed laws against a minimum wage, sick leave and teaching the people's history of resistance, to quote Modjeska Simkins:

“ladies and gentlemen, this is no sitting down time.”

