2016 was an incredible year of growth for the Ohio Student Association. We trained 60 young people in our Fellowship for Community Change. We shifted our strategic method to the “cycle of momentum” which focuses on sparking movement moments, providing mass trainings, and unleashing young leaders in Ohio. OSA participated in a number of local campaigns including: the removal of the University of Akron’s president, protesting the RNC in Cleveland, OH, and fighting for justice following the police-involved shootings of Henry Green and Tyre King. We ran the largest youth-led voter engagement program in Ohio and registered over 21,000 young people during the election season. Also, we launched the Ohio FLAME program, a statewide strategic coaching initiative that trains Ohio youth activist groups and helps them build and execute strong campaigns.

OSA continued to lead in the #BlackLivesMatter movement in Ohio by providing solidarity support around the shooting-deaths of Henry Green and Ty’re King. Ohio Student Association along with the People’s Justice Project worked to bring attention to the tragic deaths of these two Columbus natives. Together, we launched the national #KneeforTyre campaign - asking people across the nation to take a knee, similar to Colin Kaepernick, in solidarity. Additionally, our organization was selected to receive a grant from Tidal--the music streaming service owned by Jay-Z--to support our work in the Black Lives Matter movement. As we start 2017, we will continue to develop young leaders in Ohio alongside our work to solidify a transparent and democratic structure for our growing organization.
A NEW STRATEGIC VISION

In the last 5 years, the US has seen a resurgence of social movements (Immigrant Rights, Occupy Wall St., Black Lives Matter, etc.) as vehicles for social change. The seeds of OSA germinated during Occupy, and bloomed during Black Lives Matter. We have always lived in the tension between social movement mobilization and organization building. In 2016 we decided to embrace the role of not only building our organization, but of building the progressive movement in Ohio. We’ve done this in two primary ways:

1. Through our FLAME program and our OSA Fellowship curriculum, we have defined our strategic method and trained hundreds of young people inside and outside of our organization on how to spark social movements.

2. Through our work supporting the development of DivestOhio, a statewide fossil-fuel divestment campaign to revitalize the young climate movement in Ohio, we have applied our new strategic method and used it to help construct the DNA of a statewide campaign that will not be run under our brand.

We believe that embracing movement-building in addition to organization-building is the most effective way to achieve our purpose of unleashing the leadership of young people in Ohio. We expect that in the years ahead we will see the blossoming of many social movements and movement-moments. Our hope that through training, network-building and capacity building that we can plant many of these seeds.

TYRE KING & THE #KNEEFORTYRE MOVEMENT

On September 14th, 2016, Tyre King was killed by police in Columbus, OH. According to the Columbus Police Department, a police officer shot King multiple times after the boy appeared to pull a handgun from his waistband during an encounter following a report of an armed robbery. The “gun” was later discovered to be an air pistol that fires BBs - small, metal pellets, not bullets. Tyre King was only 13 years-old.

Days later, both Terence Crutcher, 40, Tulsa, OK and Keith Lamont Scott, 43, Charlotte, NC, was killed by police sparking another resurgence the movement for Black lives. We began organizing immediately to make sure Tyre King and his family received justice.

Ohio Student Association along with the People’s Justice Project (PJP) launched the #KneeForTyre campaign. Tyre loved football, and to honor his memory and help bring him justice, we asked people all around the country to take a photo or video of themselves and others taking a #KneeForTyre and to plan local actions.

In Columbus, OSA supported PJP and local activists demanding justice for Tyre King and calling on the city of Columbus to re-prioritize and reinvest in programs that actually keep our communities safe. The campaign called for the end of the “Summer Safety Initiative” - a program that put more non-uniformed police officers in black neighborhoods which led the the death of Henry Green earlier that year. We also called for independent investigations and transparent prosecution for Henry Green, Tyre King, and all future police involved shootings.

On September 26th, along with PJP and local activists, our members shut down the Columbus City Council meeting. Days later, members of the city council met with PJP to open conversations about reinvesting in community programs such as community-based violence prevention strategies, trauma and recovery services, and youth programming.

The strategic choice to focus on safety and reinvestment allowed the campaign to begin to dismantle the systemic oppressive and racist city priorities that caused the policing environment leading to the deaths of Henry Green and Tyre. We will continue for fight for justice as the case proceeds.
BLOC-POWER ELECTORAL PROGRAM

2016 was an amazing year of growth for the Ohio Student Association statewide civic engagement program. Our BLOC voter integration program allowed us to successfully integrate our civic engagement program and our community organizing. With this program, we registered thousands of young people in Ohio while building up the student organizing chapters on the ground.

A key part of the program was our BlocPower pledge cards - central to our effort to building a voting Bloc of young voters in Ohio. The BlocPower pledge cards allowed us to engage in conversation with thousands of Ohioans throughout the early spring up until Election Day. The BLOC pledges became an organizing tool to recruit supporters for political education events and to launch local campaigns. We also opened “Freedom Hubs” around the state. The hubs were staging locations for the civic engagement program, the BlocPower program, and gathering places for community events & political education programs.

From March through the November election, we began building our Ohio youth voting bloc conversation by conversation. We hired 30 part-time staff at universities across the state registering more than 21,000 voters, and collecting more than 5,000 BlocPower pledge cards, which gave us phone numbers, email addresses and issue IDs. To get out the vote, we distributed 110,000 OSA voter guides.

SELECTED MEDIA

COLORLINES - Here’s How Cleveland’s Grassroots Gave Prosecutor Timothy McGinty the Boot
THE NATION - We Still Need A Future to Believe In
HUFFINGTON POST - University Of Akron President Resigns After Financial Controversies
FUSION - These students wanted the Republicans to see the whole Cleveland
THE FINAL CALL - Young Leaders On The Frontline Of Today’s Freedom Struggle
CLEVELAND SCENE - In the Face of Skyrocketing Tuition and Debt, Hope is Found in Many Places
HARVARD POLITICAL REVIEW - From Mobilizing to Organizing: Community Organizing in Columbus, Ohio
ABC 22 - Students protest Tyre King’s shooting death at Wright State University

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Grace Goodluck, a political science major, is a lead student organizer at Kent State University. She was a part of the civic engagement team, personally registering over 700 students in 2016. She also led a campaign to start an affordable textbook co-op and she is currently working on launching a student coalition to lead a divestment campaign. “This election was so important in raising people’s awareness of everything going on. I felt that [the civic engagement work at Kent] legitimized our team and our work. We are serious about what we want to build.”

Kevin O’Donnell is a senior at Harvard and an Ohio native. He launched our Ohio FLAME program, a statewide strategic coaching initiative for activist and organized youth groups across the state. “I grew so much with OSA. Not only did I learn how to organize my community, I found a new community in this group of young people trying to make our state better. Building Ohio FLAME was the highlight of my year. I feel like we can do anything.”

ELECTORAL OUTCOMES & MOBILIZATION METRICS

Registered Voters: 21,932  Voter Guides Distributed: 110,000

Web: www.OhioStudentAssociation.org | IG/Twitter: @ohiostudents | Email: osa@ohorganizing.org

PARTNERS & FUNDERS

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