

OHIO STUDENT ASSOCIATION

2020 End-of-Year Report



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The Ohio Student Association (OSA) is a statewide grassroots organization led by young people focused on building independent political power on campuses and in communities throughout Ohio. OSA brings together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future. We do grassroots organizing, leadership development, political education, training, nonviolent direct action, advocacy for progressive public policy, cultural organizing, and more. We are incredibly proud of the work OSA members did in 2020 to invest in our communities and build toward a vision of Ohio where all of young people's lives are valued and their futures protected.

We have a vision of a world where no one is disposable, and where every person has access to the resources they need to live a life of dignity and joy and fulfill their potential. Since the formation of OSA in 2012, we have fought for accessible higher education and student debt relief, the protection of voting rights and our democracy, and an end to racist, unaccountable policing and mass incarceration. We believe that everyone should have access to free, quality education regardless of their income, race, or where they come from. We believe that democracy works best when it does not just represent the interests of the elite few, and when young people are actively part of political conversations. We believe that true justice can be restorative and uniting. In short: we believe in the power of young people to transform Ohio.

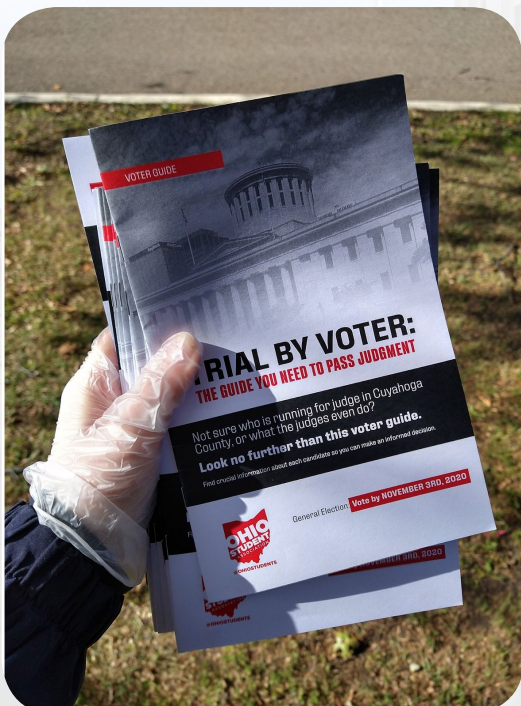


2020 OVERVIEW

Between a critical election, an ongoing pandemic, an adjustment to remote learning, and the struggles of trying to afford an education while paying off debt and making ends meet, young people in Ohio had an overwhelming and difficult year. Nonetheless, even in these dire and unfamiliar circumstances, young people have continued to find ways to organize and fight for the issues that matter most to us. For the OSA team, this has entailed getting out the vote, showing up for racial justice, fighting for criminal justice reform, and more.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In a climate of political disillusionment, we have found ways to make sure young people's voices are included in meaningful conversations, build power together, and organize to take action. During this past election season, OSA got young people registered, informed, and out to vote. Indeed, as the election approached, we sent over a million texts and made over 100,000 calls. OSA believes people should head to the polls as informed voters so they can vote in a way best aligned with their values, which is why we held candidate forums



and created voter education materials focused on local elections for Cuyahoga, Hamilton, and Franklin counties. These materials garnered thousands of digital views on our website and we distributed 265,000 physical copies of our guides. On Election Day, we helped get out the vote at the polls by vote tripling (i.e., asking voters to text or call three friends and remind them to vote), allowing us to reach 10,000 relational contacts in a single day.

Throughout the country and in the state of Ohio, we saw record youth voter turnout rates. We stood in ridiculously long lines, braved difficult weather, and faced huge obstacles to make sure our voices were heard and our votes were counted. The grassroots organizing and mobilizing of groups such as OSA played an important role in increasing youth turnout. At Central State, thanks to the efforts of the OSA chapter there, the college had the highest voter registration and turnout rates since the 2008 election.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

OSA helps lead the fight for justice in Cleveland as a member organization of the Coalition to Stop the Inhumanity at the Cuyahoga County Jail. Over the summer, we organized a “Compassion Over Cages” car caravan and rally at the Justice Center. Our Cleveland chapter also hosted the “Let Them Go!” Virtual Show, a digital fundraiser which raised over \$2,000! These funds, in partnership with The Bail Project, were used to help people going through re-entry after being released from the county jail, as well as currently incarcerated people, both communities which have been particularly affected by the coronavirus. The online concert featured speakers David Okpara and Azzurra Crispino, both of whom have been personally impacted by the injustice system, and local musicians, Mikey Silas, Kyle Kidd and Pete Saudek, and Teezy from the Clair.

ELECTORAL OUTCOMES & MOBILIZATION METRICS

Voter Guides Distributed: **265,000**

Relational Contacts: **10,000**

Texts Sent: **1.2M**

Calls Made: **100,000**



Let Them GO!

Virtual Show
Friday, May 22nd
on Facebook Live 7-9 pm

Kyle Kidd & Pete Saudek
Mikey Silas
Teezy From The Clair

#FREETHEMALL216



Our individual chapters also made great strides for justice and reform. OSA Cleveland State launched a campaign to ‘ban-the-box,’ aka to remove the criminal record disclosure requirement on the college application as part of a long-term vision to decriminalize education and remove barriers to access for formerly incarcerated folks. Thanks to OSA Cleveland State’s organizing, Cleveland State University’s application now includes a disclaimer acknowledging that “students are more than their record,” and no longer requires applicants to disclose misdemeanors. The university has committed to provide bias training to the admissions department and invest in recruiting more students who have been impacted by the injustice system. In 2021, multiple OSA chapters will be launching or continuing campaigns regarding reforming, defunding, and strengthening accountability for campus police in 2021.

HIGHER EDUCATION



OHIO STUDENT
#OHIOSTUDENTS

Policy Matters Ohio

Education and Training

HIGHER EDUCATION IN OHIO: AMBITIOUS GOALS NEED BETTER FUNDING
Colleges, universities and students struggle during pandemic

A black and white photograph of three people wearing face masks, standing outdoors. The person on the left is wearing a plaid shirt and a bucket hat. The person in the middle is wearing a white t-shirt. The person on the right is wearing a white tank top.

The pandemic recession hit college students hard, many of whom were already struggling to afford college in the first place. This was apparent in our College During COVID-19 survey taken by students throughout the state; most respondents reported being financially insecure and that their employment was impacted. We have been active in our advocacy for student debt cancellation, which translates to needed economic relief and meaningful economic stimulus.

Over the summer, OSA members met with Ohio legislature reps from the higher education subcommittee to advocate for an end to universities withholding students' transcripts due to outstanding debt, as well as eliminating the law requiring public universities to transfer overdue institutional debt to the Ohio Attorney General's office for collection. OSA member Jarrod Robinson also wrote an op-ed that was published by the Columbus Dispatch, which dealt with their experiences with student debt and the obstacles they faced because of transcript withholding, or the 'transcript trap.'

Alongside our partners Policy Matters Ohio, College Now, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center, we are continuing to push for legislative action on the transcript trap and institutional student debt through a story collection and advocacy campaign. We also collaborated with Policy Matters Ohio to publish a report in December called "Higher Education in Ohio: Ambitious Goals Need Better Funding," which examined of the role of the pandemic in increasing the burden and difficulties of college students as well as making policy recommendations, including passing federal aid and prioritizing public schools.



Social Media Presence

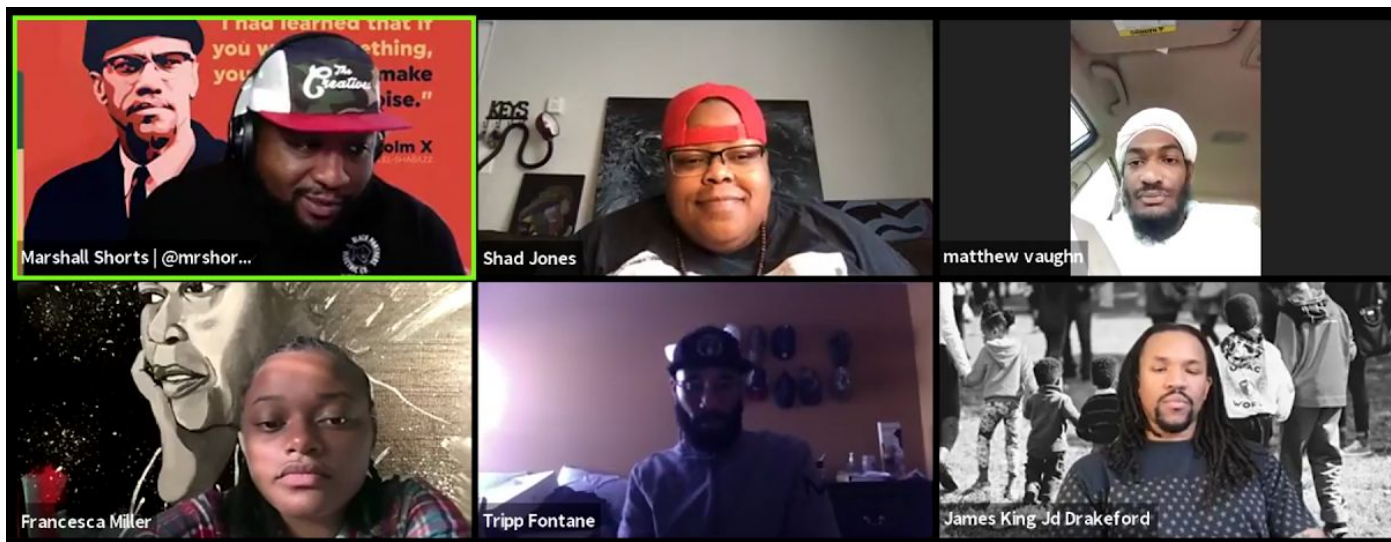
Facebook Likes: 5,308

Instagram Followers: 1,801

Twitter Followers: 5,000

ARTIST-ACTIVIST FELLOWSHIP

Cultural organizing is also an important focus area for OSA. In 2020 we launched a 12-week artist-activist fellowship. As Creative Director Marshall Shorts described it: “We entered the fellowship with the intent of engaging artists to create work for the movement. We found the fellowship to be much more.”



The six fellows met for weekly calls where the group would unpack the difficult issues and contradictions of the current political and social climate. In addition to group check-ins, the fellowship entailed a rotating hotseat to focus on the work, process, or challenges facing each artist and one-to-one meetings with Marshall. In essence, the fellowship was about bringing dialogue and community into art and using art as an activist platform to push, agitate, and create. Through the fellowship, the artist-activists created everything from music, murals, and poetry to a book, photography, a credo and fashion line, and a comedy show.

“We entered the fellowship with the intent of engaging artists to create work for the movement. We found the fellowship to be much more.”

FELLOW SPOTLIGHT



FRANCESCA MILLER

@_callmefree on IG

Francesca Miller on Facebook

Hi! My name is Francesca Miller and I am a freelance visual artist based in Columbus, OH. Art as a form of activism is something I have always been interested in, but it wasn't until being part of the OSA artist-activist fellowship this past year that it became something I practiced. The resources provided through this fellowship played a major role in helping me navigate this new territory as a creative, both practically and intellectually. I am most grateful for the guidance and support of the creative community I was part of. My time with them was enlightening, nourishing and

much needed. Everyone brought unique perspectives and experiences to our conversations, which really caused my understanding of what it means to use art as a form of activism to expand, as well as my idea of my role as an artist in society to evolve. With them I also grew to appreciate accountability, time management tactics, and learned to view myself as a professional and valuable contributor to society. I am forever grateful to have had this opportunity, and for the connections I've made as a result of it.



MATTHEW VAUGHN

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<https://music.apple.com/us/artist/matthew-vaughn/1387298981>

My legal documents say Matthew Vaughn Burress, but Matthew Vaughn has a better ring to me. I was born in Charlotte and raised in North Columbus, Ohio. I'm an ancient spirited 23-year-old with a never-ending passion for writing. I write what connects to the world, specializing in poetry, rap, songwriting, and prose. These details sound unshakeable, however, I'm not always the most secure. After receiving internal advice to apply for the fellowship,

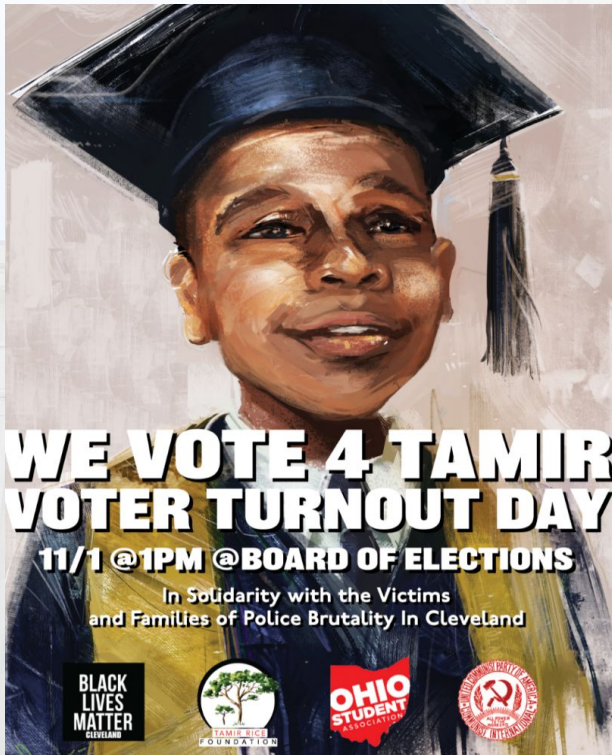
I was petrified. I didn't lack what it would take, but instead, I was fearful of my capabilities not being deserving of reward. Going on this journey with the other fellows and the open leadership of creative director Marshall Shorts allowed me to gain confidence in my own narrative. I also grew to understand that sometimes I take on a huge load without a realistic plan of execution or a way to fuel such levels of output. This fellowship granted me grace, but it also held me accountable and drove me to stand firm on what I truly believe in regards to what I feel is my form of activism.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



OSBAE

In February, OSA hosted a meet-and-greet event in Cleveland with over 50 attendees. We enjoyed tacos and rosé (or juice for our younger folks) while connecting with each other, discussing social justice, and getting plugged into local organizing work.



VOTER TURNOUT DAY:

#WEVOTE4TAMIR

In collaboration with the Tamir E. Rice Foundation, Cleveland Votes, and BLM Cleveland, we held a voter turnout day in memory of Tamir, who would have been 18 years old and a first time voter in the 2020 general election. We showed up to vote early to make sure our voices were heard and in solidarity with victims of police brutality and their families.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



MAGGIE PHILLIPS

Cleveland State University

My name is Maggie Philips and I am a junior at Cleveland State University studying Political Science. Ban-the-Box was the first campaign I worked on for OSA and the first experience I had with organizing. I was initially unsure of how I could contribute to this campaign, but seeing the passion other members held and the overall importance of banning the box encouraged me to participate in any way I could. Working on Ban-the-Box pushed me to improve my research, writing, and communication skills as well as my leadership capabilities. Experience on the campaign proved to me that everyone has the power to become an organizer and fight for change within their community.

ESSYNCE MACKKEY

Central State University

Essynce Mackey is a junior at Central State University majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing from Chicago, Illinois. Essynce became an official member of OSA about a year ago. She strives to bring change to her university and make her peers feel comfortable in their community. Through OSA Essynce alongside other students at CSU we're able to create a modified grading system proposal to assist students through COVID-19. She was able to work with a multitude of students to collect data in order to prove the effects of COVID-19 on students' academics. She continues to work hard for her University and peers. Essynce's goal is to make Central State a better place before she graduates.



SELECTED MEDIA



*Family Of Tamir Rice Asks
People To Vote And Be
His Voice*

*Cleveland Students
Organize To 'Ban The Box'
On College Applications*

*Too Many Students Can't
Shed Crushing Debt*

*Converting Youth Activism
Into Youth Voters*

*Ohio Student Association
To Host A Virtual Concert
To Benefit The Incarcerated
Community*

*Groups Ask Ohio Ag To
Stop Collecting Student
Debt During Pandemic*