Organizing on Shifting Terrain
Facilitator's Guide

For groups planning to hold sessions with all three modules in this curriculum, we recommend that this one be first in the line-up.

The first 20 of the 35 slides in this installment focus on the demographic and economic trends that are shaping the 2016 election; that is, the 'shifting terrain." The next five slides focus on the resurgence of overt racism — the white backlash - that has become a defining feature of the current electoral contest. That is followed by a brief look at the concrete politics of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

This module closes with an outline of the strategy for electoral and non-electoral action we feel will best advance the social justice movements in 2016 and beyond. This perspective is elaborated more fully in the section of the curriculum titled "The U.S. Electoral System and Progressive Electoral Strategy."

To cover all this material in a two-hour session requires a relatively fast pace — an average of just four minutes per slide for both a facilitator's remarks and then questions and discussion. Some slides — for instance those that introduce sections - will only take a minute to cover. But the discussion of others could go on for some time, especially since we hope these Power Points serve more as a springboard to interaction and conversation than as a kind of lecture.

Each audience will be different. Therefore we encourage you to 'custom design' the time allotments for different sections based on your knowledge of each audience. We hope that every session will spend at least some time on each section. If you feel it necessary to cut some slides in order to make sure you have time for the final sections, we recommend dropping some of the slides that cover the changing electorate. This is the longest section of the Power Point and has a level of detail that may not be needed for your group.

For several slides the main point is explicit and we offer only minimal additional comment in the notes below. For other slides we offer additional information, highlight the "punchline" or make suggestions that may help you as facilitator. We think it would also be helpful for facilitators to look over the Resource Guide before holding a session, and then check out whichever articles listed seem to be most relevant to the points you want to focus on. You might also consider printing out articles that you find especially useful, as well as the Resource Guide itself, and making copies available to people attending the session.

Finally, we think this and the other curriculum modules may help people organize their thoughts on election 2016 even if they cannot or do not want to attend a discussion using one or another of them. Feel free to print out the slides or circulate the modules via email to anyone you think might find it politically useful.

Notes on some of the specific slides now follow:

Slide 1: Organizing on Shifting Terrain
The slide text presents the goal of the session. It can be projected on the screen as people are gathering. Introductions and other preliminaries can be done while this is in view.

Slide 2: Increasing Polarization

The punchline here is that politics are more polarized in this country than they have been in several decades.

Note that here and throughout this presentation we talk about affiliation in terms of the Democratic and Republican parties. We do this not because we think that these are the only meaningful political positions. Far from it! We think we need an outside left force to really change the terms of politics in this country. But using these established political positions which are measured by professional pollsters and sociologists gives us a way to concretely understand the changing terrain of U.S. politics.

Slide 3: Major Social Shifts Reshape the Political Terrain

This slide telegraphs the essential punchlines that will be explained in more detail in the slides that follow. We don't recommend discussion here; use it as an introduction to move on to the specifics which follow.

Slide 4: Neoliberalism

Many audience members may not be familiar with the term "Neoliberalism." You can explain that it is a term now widely used by economists to explain the current arrangement of US and global capitalism. Different from other arrangements in the past. It started as a conservative project in the United States, but become a bi-partisan consensus in Washington over the last 30 years.

It is characterized by:

Cutbacks: Cuts to government programs that help poor and working people, especially government programs that require taxing the rich.

Corporate power: Enable corporations and the wealthy to increase profits through deregulation, privatization, free trade, and weakened unions.

Crackdowns: Strengthen the police, military and carceral (lock people up) state. And it has led to economic and political **Crises**.

An article By Betita Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia that is flagged in the resource guide has more extensive definition of Neoliberalism.

Slide 5: Crisis of Inequality

The neoliberal project has been underway for more than four decades. As it has matured, the growth in inequality and the economic instability that it promotes have become clear.

Since the 1970s, and especially since 2008, economic inequality has been on the rise in the U.S. These two charts show how inequality has risen since the neoliberal project began in the 1970s.

America's top 10% now average nearly nine times as much income as the bottom 90%. Americans in the top 1% average over 38 times more income than the bottom 90%. The nation's top 0.1% are taking in over 184 times the income of the bottom 90 percent.

What's been termed the "middle class" has been decimated, and upward mobility has all but ended for working people in this country. And the power dynamics at play have become clearer: there is now a

widespread understanding in society that there is a tiny elite who benefit from these policies - whether we call them the 1% or the "billionaire class" - and that politicians on both sides of the aisle have helped to move this agenda forward.

Slide 6: Crisis of Neoliberalism

The combination of the economic crisis in 2008 and the political revolt from below in response has thrown the neoliberal project itself into crisis. Even some of its most serious advocates have started to question the neoliberal model and talk about new ways forward. So we're seeing a real crisis of policy among the elite.

This creates the context for the incredible populist moment that we are now witnessing, where both right-wing and left-wing populism are gaining traction by speaking directly to the suffering of poor and working people and denouncing the "establishment" politics that got us here.

Punchline Main Point: This breaking point offers both an opening to move radical politics forward and, with the explosive growth of right-wing racist populism, a moment of extreme political danger.

Slide 7: Changing Global Role of the U.S.

The crisis of neoliberalism intersects with global politics: the declining economic power of the United States in the world and international demographic transitions (e.g., the growth of China's economic power, growing Asian and Muslim populations).

Punchline: This development challenges the aspects of U.S. national identity that are about being the primary power in the world, further intensifying the crisis of national identity and the racialized fears and resentment among many white people about the coming people of color majority in the U.S.

Slide 8: End of White Majority & Rise of People of Color Majority

Punchline: At the same time, we are in a moment of deep struggle over race and national identity in this country. That is, there is a growing struggle over who "we" are as a nation. As we move closer to people of color becoming the majority of the nation, neither racial politics nor our national identity can be maintained in the same form. It is inevitable that we will face a series of struggles over how racial politics will be reorganized, but the outcome of these struggles is far from inevitable. What do we know about how these dynamics will likely play out?

You may want to discuss the following points which elaborate on the punchline here, or they may come up — together or in different pieces — at later points in the session. Or you may consider this background for further discussion in other settings.

As we saw years ago in Obama's campaign, the possibility of a new multi-racial national identity has an appeal across racial lines, most strongly in communities of color and with young people but also reaching well into sections of white middle and working class communities.

We know that there will be a white backlash and a defense of the implicit whiteness of U.S.'s national identity, building on a longstanding history of white racial anxiety and exacerbated by the end of upward mobility for white people. We saw this trend in the backlash that emerged against Obama and the new national identity that he represented: anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-Black sentiment which breaks through into violence with increasing regularity, including the recent violent and explicitly white supremacist tendencies that are cohering around Trump.

There is potential power in the growth of communities of color, which has already begun to be channeled into the growing power of the Black and Latino vote as well as the explosive growth of the Movement for Black Lives. At the same time, there are systematic attempts to stymie that power, through policies like voter identification.

History suggests that the boundaries of whiteness can be expanded to include people who were previously not considered "white," when the balance of power starts to tip towards communities of color. Some communities of color are currently being tested out for honorary "whiteness," as we can see in the "whitening" of sections of the Latino community in Florida.   So we could see a fracturing between and within communities of color as sections of different communities choose to affiliate with whiteness and with U.S. citizenship at the expense of deeper multi-racial solidarity.

Communities of color do not experience racism in a monolithic way, so solidarity cannot be assumed to be automatic. Conditions are profoundly different for different Black, Latino, Asian and Middle Eastern communities. Tensions between communities of color continue to be very real, often reflecting real struggles over how to advance from the margins of a society with diminishing resources.

It would be easy to assume that a people of color majority will automatically mean a shift towards multi-racial solidarity and progressive politics, at least in the long run. But this outcome is far from certain. We could end up with an entrenched white power structure that uses repression and anti-democratic measures to shore up its power. We could also see an expansion of the white community to include sub-sections of communities that are currently considered to be "of color" while other people of color are pushed even further to the margins. Or we could see a progressive transformation of racial power relations and a new multi-racial national identity. These are all different stories of who "we" are.

The main point here is that a contestation over the racial and national identity of the changing United States is underway, and it is a fundamental force that is shaping contemporary politics. This moment creates significant political space on both the left and right, opening windows of opportunity for reshaping a more expansive racial politics and national identity, and it also opens up space for right-wing narratives around racial nostalgia and white supremacy and the potential for the fracturing and dispersion of the potential power of communities of color.

There are a number of other important demographic transitions that are playing out politically: the aging population, the fact that women are now the majority of the workforce and more. **But race is the primary question in political play right now.**

This has frequently been the case throughout U.S. history. It happened first when European indentured servants allied with enslaved African people during Bacon's Rebellion, which successfully overthrew the government of Jamestown. Following this uprising, the government developed laws to protect white servants form the worst abuses, to ensure that they would have access to land and guns when their contracts ended and that they would have access to improved social status. This is in fact, when the idea of "whiteness" was first invented. This happened again in the 1930s, when Southern and Eastern European immigrants began to organize and ally with Black communities; these "not-quite-white" immigrants were welcomed into the fold of whiteness and offered both social status and material benefits (like good union contracts and access to public education and affordable mortgages through the GI Bill).

Slide 9: Polarization & Instability

Depending on how much time is available at this point in the session, this text could serve as a spark to discussion or just be noted as listing some of the ideas that are out there in society (and the left) while moving on to the next slide.

The main point either way is to reinforce the idea presented earlier that the country is in a period of major polarization and instability.

Slide 10: The "Rising American Electorate"

This slide introduces the **overall punchlines** of the majority of the slides that follow:

1. There is a 'rising American electorate' made up of communities of color, unmarried women and millennials, all of whom have tended toward a progressive agenda. This configuration will be the majority of potential voters for the first time in 2016.

2. There is a growing backlash rooted in large numbers of white voters who are undergoing economic hardship and see causes of distress through a racist and xenophobic lens.

These points will be fleshed out in the slides that follow.

Slide 11: What is the "Rising American Electorate?"

This slide summarizes the essential components of the "Rising American Electorate." It is a term used to describe the social base that elected Obama, which is seen as having increasing importance in elections and which will represent the basis of a progressive electoral majority. The Rising American Electorate is made up of three groups.

- Communities of color

- Unmarried women

- Millennials

All of these growing populations tend to vote more progressively than the US population as a whole, but their voter turnout is relatively low.

The next nine slides, #12-20, present more detail about these groups and their voting patterns. If you feel you have to cut down the number of slides for your session, we recommend you cut some of these, but if possible avoid cutting slides #12 and #13.

Slide 12: Changing Racial Composition of the Electorate

Punchline: 2016 Voters more racially diverse than ever, with a higher percentage of eligible voters of color than in any previous election.

Nearly one-in-three eligible voters on Election Day (31%) will be Latino, Black, Asian or another racial or ethnic minority, up from 29% in 2012 (Pew) and 12% in 1980 (Roper).

In 2012, 93% of African Americans, 71% of Latinos and 73% of Asians voted for Obama.

And the corollary decline of the white electorate:

The percentage of eligible voters who are white has declined from 78 to 69% since 2000, with a class skew.

The share of the total vote cast by whites without a college degree has tumbled from 65% in 1980 to just 36% in 2012.

College-educated whites increased their vote share from around one-fourth in the 1980s to 36% in 2012, matching non-college educated whites for the first time.

Slide 13: Race: A Key Factor Shaping Political Alignment

One punchline point: Race is a key factor shaping political alignment

Slide 14: Voter Turnout Rates by Race

Voter turnout has historically tended to be lower in communities of color than in white communities. The last presidential election was an exception, when Black voters turned out at higher rates than white voters to keep President Obama in office.

Low voter turnout weakens the potential political power of communities of color.

Slide 15: Unmarried Women Voters: A Rising Force

This slide turns to the second component of the Rising American Electorate:

Roughly 52% of the U.S. electorate is comprised of women, according to a recent **U.S. Census Bureau report**. Women have a higher than average voter turnout.

Unmarried women now make up slightly more than 50% of eligible women voters (and slightly over 25% of the total electorate).

Two-thirds of unmarried women voters voted for Barack Obama in 2012.

Slide 16: Women of Color Voters: A Rising Force

Slides 16 and 17 can be run together before pausing.

The potential electoral power of women of color is growing even more quickly than white women…. And (see next slide)

Slide 17: Women of Color Are More Progressive Voters Than White Women 2012 Presidential Election

Women of color tend to be much more progressive than white women, and note that the "racial gap" in voter preferences is much larger than the "gender gap."

Slide 18: The Rise of Millenials

And turning to the third component of the "Rising American Electorate", slides 18 and 19 can be run together before pausing:

As of April 2016, an estimated 69.2 million Millennials (adults ages 18-35 in 2016) were voting-age U.S. citizens – a number almost equal to the 69.7 million Baby Boomers (ages 52-70) in the nation's electorate.

Slide 19: Millenials Are More Progressive Voters Than Older Generations

Millennials are more progressive than older generations. In 2012, 60% of Millennials voted for Obama

Slide 20: 2012 and 2014 Election Behavior

All of these "RAE" populations tend to vote more progressive than the non-RAE sectors, with the racial gap the most pronounced. But voter turnout in the RAE sectors is significantly lower than its potential.

Slide 21: Understanding White Backlash

This slide begins the section on Donald Trump and the white backlash.

Most of Trump's supporters come out of the declining white male electorate. There are two different kinds of factors that seem to increase the likelihood of white men supporting Trump:

*Living in regions with high unemployment, deindustrialization and rising death rates

*Explicit racial bias and nativism

Note that the slide gives the answers people gave to pollsters about their economic situation, which does not necessarily correspond to their actual conditions. The most extensive study of Trump supporters so far does not indicate they are mainly the poorest white people or those suffering the most economic problems since 2008. On the contrary, their incomes are above the national average, and even above the average for whites. But most come from areas where hardship is real. And, indicating the link between backing Trump and racial resentment, the highest percentage come from zip codes where segregation has produced racially isolated white populations; that is, whites that have the least contact with people of color and/or recent immigrants.

Trump has used race and nation to help downwardly mobile white people make sense of their experiences.

The fanning of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and racist sentiments which has driven this year's campaign of Donald Trump in particular, and the GOP's acceptance of Trump as its nominee, has underscored the fact that white racial solidarity is the anchor and heart of right wing politics in the U.S. across the spectrum from ordinary conservatism to rabid white supremacy.

But we have to recognize that the economic anger is real. If we don't engage that anger and help people make sense of it another way, then its energy will move towards the right. We need to actively work to break white racial solidarity so the downwardly mobile white people see their shared interest with communities of color.

Slide 22: Economic Hardship Is Real

This slide and the next can run together before pausing. Both underscore the point that economic hardship for U.S. workers is very real.

This chart indicates that real wages (that is, wages adjusted for inflation) for full-time male workers have declined since the 1970s….

Slide 23: The Middle Class Is Losing Ground

…And this graphic shows that the share of U.S. adults living in middle-income households has been falling since 1971.

Slide 24: Especially in Regions Most Supportive of Trump

This slide wraps up this section by returning to the point that Trump support correlates with areas that have less upward economic mobility than the national average. Note that this also correlates strongly with the southern states, long the region of the country with the most poverty, the most conservative state government policies and the most widespread backward racial attitudes among their white populations.

Slide 25: What Weighs in the Balance

This slide poses the political question that is taken up in the next two sections, which focus on the 2016 election and progressive electoral strategy.

Slide 26: The Intense Battle Ahead

The two major party candidates for the presidency are speaking to the economic, demographic and global-political trends noted so far, and to various popular sectors' reactions to them, in very different ways. Their different stances represent different interests, offer different narratives and policy solutions, and deploy different notions of who "we" are and who "the enemy" is.

Slide 27: Core Political Stance

This slide tries to capture the core political stances of Trump and Clinton. What these candidates do in this election, and the outcome, will have long-term political consequences in terms of what groups of people see themselves as having a shared interest and identity.

Slide 28: Potential Impacts

This slide focuses on the impact of the Trump and Clinton candidacies so far, and the likely consequences of a Trump or Clinton presidency.

Trump: We can all see the incredible dangers that a Trump presidency would represent: if elected, he could lay the groundwork for fascism. But his campaign will have impacts, regardless of the Election Day outcome. His campaign has already (1) strengthened the racist right-wing and emboldened all those who call for "law and order," "deporting immigrants" and 'showing the rest of the world who is boss"; (2) cut into our ability to build multi-racial class unity by solidifying racial resentments among whites who are filled with economic anxiety.

Clinton: A Clinton victory is the only way to defeat Trump. On the importance of this the social justice movement has a common interest with the Clinton campaign. But her goals and ours diverge — and are opposed — in many other areas. The Clinton camp wants to consolidate the corporate hold over the White House and the Democratic Party, marking the Democrats as the middle class party and the Republicans as the working class party (in the eyes of whites anyway). Unless the social justice

movements, even while mobilizing against Trump, can advance our own ideas and expand our base and clout, the right could seize the banner of being the most prominent "anti-establishment" party in the U.S. But if we can build stronger progressive unity and fighting strength out of the momentum of the Sanders campaign, Black Lives Matter, fight for 15 and other social movements, we have a chance to become a much stronger force in national politics than we have been in the last few decades.

The point is that the current electoral contest carries both immense threats and genuine possibilities in mass politics for social justice organizations and activists.

Slide 29: What Came Out of Sanders' Campaign?

One part of maximizing our effectiveness is drawing some lessons out of the Bernie Sanders campaign.

Sanders main thrust: Left-Wing populism; Race-blind (Weak) class universalism based on the New Deal

Who were his "bad guys": the Billionaire class (1%, Wall Street)

Sanders core base: The two main bases for his effort were (1) the downwardly mobile white working and middle class, made through (mostly) race-blind appeals to economic interests; and (2) and young people of all races.

Though he moved significantly on race and nationality and took some impressive positions over time, he was unable to speak to race in a way that moved communities of color in a mass way.

A pivotal question going forward is whether or not the forms Bernie and his allies are setting up to institutionalize the "political revolution" will gain traction.

Slide 30: Left Responses and Strategies

This slide begins the section on strategy for the 2016 election and beyond.

It presents the perspective that it is crucial to defeat Trump, but the social justice movements need to engage in election 2016 in a way that also amplifies our own voice and builds our own strength.

Slide 31: Strategies Currently in Motion

This slide takes note of alternatives to the strategy proposed in this module. Unless there are people in your session who want to argue for one or another of these strategies, we recommend you use this slide mainly to note for people that there are differences on the left and move on. If you or the group feels the need to engage in debate over these differences in this session, or to better understand these alternative viewpoints, we recommend that you try to go through Slides 32-34 first and then take up these debates when the last slide is on the screen, after the strategy laid out here is fleshed out a bit.

For more discussion of these alternative strategies and their limitations, see the third module in this series, "The U.S. Electoral System and Progressive Electoral Strategy."

Slide 32: Components of a Comprehensive Left Strategy: Landslide Against Trump

This slide presents the first of four points that we believe make up a comprehensive left strategy for 2016 and beyond.

Given the non-viability of third parties in the U.S. winner-take-all system, defeating Trump necessarily means support for Hillary, particularly in swing states.

There is a lot of dialogue to be had about how to do this work while maintaining a critical stance towards Hillary. But we would argue that the more decisive question is what else we do in the process. See the following slides.

Slide 33: Components: Build on Sanders' Momentum

Support down-ballot candidates whose politics are more closely aligned (e.g. candidates affiliated with the Sanders momentum, candidates who are voicing more explicit progressive politics around race, immigration and economic inequality) and build/ strengthen independent or quasi-independent platforms for electoral organizing.

Slide 34: Components: Build Independent Organizations

Build independent organizations for outside struggle, with ambitious campaigns to be launched in the immediate wake of the election, raising some of the core demands that have gained traction through the Sanders candidacy (student debt, health care, etc.) and through emergent racial justice movements.

It will also be important to revitalize the antiwar movement and strengthen the movement in solidarity with Palestine no matter who wins the presidency.

Slide 35: Build the Progressive Bloc

Work to cohere a more unified progressive bloc built around the multi-racial working class, with anti-racism and anti-militarism integral to its agenda.

Communities of color will be the core constituencies, but the stance must be to contest for the political support of the downwardly mobile white working class. There should also be an attempt to gain the support of the middle classes, primarily through the promotion of economic development programs that advance social and economic justice.

The thrust of the political framing would likely be what can roughly be described as "multi-racial progressive populism," likely combining the economic demands raised in the Sanders campaign, the most progressive aspects of Obama's narrative on who "we" are as a nation and the more radical demands developing out of the new racial justice movements.

We hope that the group has been able to move through the material in a way that leaves a good amount of time for a wrap up discussion off this final slide. That is less important if the group is going to be holding sessions on the other two modules as well, especially the third one on Electoral Strategy. In that session the "inside/outside" or "tea party of the left" perspective is focused on in more detail. If time is short and a session using that Power Point had not been planned, perhaps people will now want to schedule such a discussion in order to pursue the important strategic discussion further.