PUI Assignment #8

Part 1:

Block the Vote is an informational website about voter suppression. While there are many news articles, organizational websites, and data visualizations on the topic, there is not a centralized location on the web for all of this information to exist in an easy to understand format. Block the Vote intends to fill that hole by compiling both quantitative and qualitative data regarding voter suppression, visualizing the data in an interactive and compelling manner, and packaging everything in a narrative that explains the pertinence of the topic.

The major interactive components of the site are two maps that visualize the presence of voter suppression topics in different U.S. states. For instance, on the Voter ID Laws page, the map displays the different kinds of identification (if any at all) that states require to vote. While some other sites have conveyed the same information similarly, the colors used in these visualizations were often hard to understand. Further, these sites were often cluttered with myriads of elements and text, diluting the effect of whatever information the designer wished to highlight. Block the Vote's minimalist map design strips the page of any unnecessary visual features, emphasizing the purple highlights on the black and white map. In addition, the discussion on each topic page was minimized to reduce the amount of reading a user has to perform. Streamlining and condensing a topic like voter suppression is difficult, but since so much information and discussion already exists, displaying only the most essential information in an visually pleasing fashion with a succinct summary seemed to be the best way to engage readers. Considering this, the target audience for Block the Vote are those who wish to learn about voter suppression, but don't have time to wade through article upon article.

Part 2:

- Home screen
  - A cycling slideshow of statistic debunking voter fraud
  - User would simply watch the cycling stats as an intro the site, then click on "learn more" at the bottom of the page.
- Map
  - An interactive map that allows hovering and clicking on U.S. states to zoom in and learn more about that state.
  - On the Voter ID and Voter Purge page, hover over states to update the information in the text box in the bottom left corner and click on a state to zoom in on it.

Part 3:

1. Leaflet
2. Leaflet was recommended to me by another professor as the best tool to create interactive maps that incorporate custom data and layers.
3. I used leaflet to plot data that displayed the different policies between U.S. that relate to voter suppression.
4. The maps offer a visual representation of voter suppression — a topic that is most often described through text and writing. Visually engaging a reader might encourage them to continue learning about the topic.

Part 4:
The two biggest changes I made from my first prototype was moving the map from the home page to different pages on the site and changing the color scheme. While the map was moved

mainly because I was having trouble creating filters to display different data on the map simultaneously. Sectioning off parts of my site specifically for certain data streamlined the design process and allowed me to focus each map on one topic. Further, creating multiple pages versus piling everything onto one page enabled me to create a more cohesive narrative that led the user through a journey of sorts. The color scheme change mainly came about because I didn't want to use the traditional red, white, and blue that are overused on any politically related artifact. Black, white, and gray were used because of relative lack of connotation, although they do highlight the racial themes within voter suppression. Purple was used as a highlight color because of its striking contrast to white and black.

Part 5:
The most difficult challenge of this project was creating an engaging narrative. Voter suppression is really tricky to talk about. There's a long history of it that is arguably required to fully grasp the weight of the issue and the only data we have that suggests the presence of voter suppression is granular and requires a decent amount of analysis. Leading a reader through this process without dumping a whole bunch of text on them without losing their interest yet communicating the importance of the problem was tough. I still don't know if I accomplished this or if I have figured out a solution.