



Report on the
First Annual
Summit on
Latin@s

“Shaping the Future of New York City”

A search conference sponsored by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute at CUNY, the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Members Ydanis Rodríguez and Carlos Menchaca, and the Hispanic Federation

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Introduction

MORE THAN 2.4 MILLIONS LATINOS reside in New York City, out of an overall population of 8.5 million, according to the NYC Department of City Planning. Nearly one-quarter of city residents speak Spanish, according to a 2012 report. There are neighborhoods, such as El Barrio, Jackson Heights, Washington Heights, and Sunset Park, that are known as Latino enclaves.

What, then, is the present state of the Latino community in New York City? How are they faring in the current social and political climate? What does the future look like for Latinos in the greatest city in the world?

On June 1, 2017, The Center for Puerto Rican Studies, the CUNY Dominican Studies Institutes, and the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute at CUNY, along with other partners, convened the first annual Summit on Latin@s, held at Hunter College's Silberman School of Social Work in East Harlem to answer these questions and to craft an action agenda based on the recommendations elicited from the participants. The daylong search conference gathered together academics, elected officials, and members of unions and community-based organizations-seeking to:

- Identify current adverse conditions affecting Latinos in New York City;
- Identify elements in the urban environment that may be constraining the effective addressing of those adverse conditions;
- Develop a solid action plan to address those conditions; and
- Assign responsibilities in order to carry out the action plan

The invited guests were grouped into ten themed panels, ranging from education to immigration to business development. Using the participation-driven approach of a search conference, the panelists were tasked to answer three questions: What do we know about the issue? What can we do? And who is going to do it?

Following is a summary of conclusions and recommendations made during the panels. Each panel was asked to word its goal in the form of a slogan that could easily convey the panel's recommended action agenda.

It had been our genuine intention to release and circulate this summary shortly after the 2017 summit in order to make it available to stakeholders as well as the broader Latino community and its political leadership. Unfortunately, the natural events that affected Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean (hurricanes Irma and Maria), as well as Mexico (earthquake), in the weeks following the summit, demanded a shift of our attention in order to respond to those catastrophic events and engage in solidarity work to address the humanitarian crises that have unfolded since then. Yet, we have neither forgotten our commitment to the Latino community in New York City nor forsaken our efforts around the summit. Therefore, the conveners of the summit present this report and invite Latino New Yorkers to review it and engage it as we prepare the second annual Summit of Latinos in New York City and the forging of a Latino agenda for the City.

Concurrent Panels

1. New York City Council Members Plenary

Councilmember **Ydanis Rodríguez**,
10th Council District

Councilmember **Carlos Menchaca**,
38th Council District

Assembly Member Carmen De La Rosa,
New York State Assembly, 72nd District

These panelists answered questions addressed to them by audience members.

Recommendations

- Create a designated place for the Latino community of New York City to discuss ideas and topics that are important for the community, and ensure that LGBT issues be part of the discussion.
- Encourage more civic engagement from the Latino community. Assembly Member De La Rosa noted that the upcoming U.S. census would be very important in terms of how Latinos will be counted.
- Affordable housing is a priority and, while gentrification is contentious, newcomers should be welcomed.
- Build coalitions with other communities, such as the Muslim and African American communities.

Goal: “Get Latinos more involved in the civic process.”

2. Education: K-12 and Youth

Moderator: **Luis O. Reyes**

New York State Board of Regents

Aracelis Lucero, Executive Director, Masa
Cristina Melendez, University of Pennsylvania,
PhD candidate and former NYC public school
educator

Henry Rubio, First Vice President, Council of
School Supervisors and Administrators

While Latinos have increased college degree attainment in recent years, they are still behind most other groups. Additionally, many Latino students are concentrated in schools in districts with high degrees of poverty.

Recommendations

- Community leaders and elected officials need to work with schools and the school system to make changes in their curriculum, in teacher training, and in instruction and support services in ways that are responsive to the linguistic and cultural identities and needs of children and their parents. Different communities and different populations need different, tailored solutions. Community leaders, educational activists and elected officials should also push for inclusion of the history and culture of Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and other Latino countries in the school’s curriculum and testing.
- Improve school performance by changing the way students are enrolled and schools are funded. Currently, the school systems dumps and defunds: The most difficult students are often dumped and lumped into one place, and some schools receive a larger percentage of funds while others get defunded or are underfunded. This means fewer resources and children who are unprepared to go into higher educational levels.

- Since parents' involvement in their children's education is important and beneficial, encourage parents to get more involved in their community boards or education councils and to train them to speak up for their children. It is important that parents help their children adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Goal: "Quality education for Latinos, for everyone."

- Since citizenship is key to getting Latinos to participate in the democratic process and in voting for local and federal representatives, roadblocks to naturalization must be removed. For example, find ways to assist families in affording the costs related to naturalization.

Goal: "Increase Latino civic participation and political engagement."

3. Civil Rights and Political Engagement

Moderator: Jaime Estades

Esq., founder and President, Latino Leadership Institute

Eddie Cuesta, National Executive Director, Dominicanos USA

Maria Lizardo, Executive Director, Northern Manhattan Immigrant Coalition

Javier Valdes, Co-Executive Director, Make the Road

Latinos need to be more informed about how the U.S. democracy works, and they need to be more civically and politically engaged in their communities. Also, roadblocks to immigration make it difficult for all Latinos to participate in the democratic process.

Recommendations

- Because civic and political engagement is more than voting, create an ongoing network beyond this conference that continues to examine how we can remain engaged and involved at the local level with community boards, the PTA, and other local organizations.
- Since political engagement and protesting are a right, encourage people to get involved in new ways, for example, using apps such as Resistbot, which helps voters identify their elected officials and drafts letters to them. It is important to interact with our elected officials on a regular basis beyond election cycles.

4. Immigration

Moderator: Jessica Orozco Guttlein

Esq., Assistant Vice President for Policy, Hispanic Federation

Sarah Gillman, New York Family Unity Project

Evelyn Ortiz, Chief External Affairs Officer, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

Diana Rodriguez, East Side Houses

César Vargas, Co-Director, DREAM Act Coalition

In New York City, despite being a city founded and filled with immigrants, many foreign-born residents remain excluded from the opportunity to gain adequate legal defense, social services, mental health services, and education.

Recommendations

- If New York City is to be a true sanctuary city, it needs to fully invest in these pro-immigrant programs. For example, the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project provides legal defense for adults that are in detention and removal proceedings.
- Educate people about available resources. There should be a centralized place where immigrants may have access to information from services targeted to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); immigrants who have deportation orders; community rights; and adult literacy.
- Inform people about issues that affect the immigrant community and encourage them to

get involved and volunteer for different initiatives. Approach faith-based organizations and other institutions that can help with the education of rights. Create fundraising campaigns for the help of the immigrant community.

- Promote political engagement among the Latino community. Demand local, state, and federal government for services and rights. Reach out to elected officials and participate in elections.
- Generate a publicly accessible website with yearly updated, overall contact and mission information for all advocacy and activist Latino organizations of New York City.

Goal: “Uphold, defend, and expand Latino immigrant defense and support services.”

5. Improving Economic Security

Moderator: **Diana Caba**, Director of Economic Empowerment, Hispanic Federation

Twiggy Rodriguez, Vice President for primary healthcare, Acacia Network, Inc.

Héctor Cordero-Guzmán, Professor, School of Public Affairs, Baruch College

Jesse Laymon, Director for Policy and Advocacy, New York City Employment and Training Coalition

Maritza Silva-Farrell, Alliance for a Greater New York

Economic security is a critical issue for the Latino community. It was why members of the Latino community made their way to New York City, and it continues to be a concern as many of us strive to survive amidst rising costs and low or stagnant wages. Current economic and political policies fail to see our neighborhoods as economic engines. According to Jesse Laymon, more than 50% of New York City workers are immigrants. “They are the economy,” says Laymon.

Recommendations

- Encourage place-based development by ensuring investments made in the city reach our communities and support local community-based organizations and small businesses. Advocate for: policies such as paid sick leave and parental leave for all workers; public health (e.g., food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare); and job creation.
- Encourage government and community organizations to support small businesses by: increasing pathways to achieving employment; supporting trade schools and apprenticeships; and helping skilled immigrants obtain equivalent credentials or recertification.
- Open doors for women by improving the quality of available jobs for them.
- Work toward Affordable Housing reforms, including better adjustments formulas needed to be implemented for Affordable Housing; stronger advocacy for local residents; creative policy making (such as tax credits and involvement from non-profits) in order to target current communities rather than encouraging middle income residents to move in and utilize affordable development.

Goal: “Community development through people and place-based policies.”

6. Business Development

Moderator: **Wendy García**, Chief Diversity Officer, Office of New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer

Josephine Infante, founder, Hunts Point Economic Development Corporation

Frank García, Chairman, New York State Coalition Hispanic Chambers of Commerce

Carlos Sierra, Community liaison, CUNY Citizenship Now

Latino businesses are severely underserved in New York, both on the state and local level. According to Wendy García, there are more than 200,000 Latino businesses in New York City (\$13 million in receipts), and less than 1,000 of them are certified to do business in the city. Additionally, 90% of major business contracts go to firms with a white male majority and only 4.8% of contracts go to Latino businesses.

Recommendations

- Implement certification-oriented business development training for Latino businesses. Many Latino business owners are not aware of the qualifications needed to become certified. As a result, they become part of the informal market, a sector in the New York financial world that is condemned by policy makers, both in the state and the city.
- Allow an avenue through which recent immigrants can increase their business savvy and qualifications for certification through their consulates.
- Educate our business community about programs and opportunities that could be advantageous to them. CUNY and SUNY should increase the number of free courses offered for business development and entrepreneurship.
- Increase the exposure of current business classes, as well as programs and incentives that are available to MWBEs in the media so that more Latino and minority business owners are aware of the opportunities and can take advantage of them.
- Encourage state, city, and the Latino communities in New York to ensure Latino-owned businesses have equal opportunity to contracts from large firms, for example, through a 30% mandate for minority and women-owned business enterprises to get contracts from large firms to be implemented at the city, state, and national levels.
- Encourage voter participation at the state and local level, using representatives to fight back against the detriments of gentrification.
- Launch campaign mobilizing Latino communities through business development classes geared to business-certification obtainment, and organizing to resist the influx of dominant paradigm firms

taking the majority of contracts for redevelopment in Latino communities.

Goal: “Latino access to capital and business development.”

7. Higher Education and Youth

Moderator: Joseph Barba, CUNY STEM Institute

Christabel Cruz, Student Affairs Professional, and PhD candidate, Rutgers University

Berkis Cruz Eusebio, Career and Employment Specialist, Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, CUNY ASAP

Monica Sibri, founder, CUNY DREAMers

There is a lack of opportunities for Latinos in higher education. While there are programs and support for Latinos, these are often the first to lose funding. Also, undocumented students have a low retention rate, and this is likely because they face many challenges, such as having to often pay state tuition for city schools, and lack of resources for professional preparation for them.

Recommendations

- Create a local coalition to offer rigorous STEM education for Latinos before they get to college. This coalition should be made up of public schools, higher education academic institutions, and industries that hire students from the STEM field.
- CUNY should hire an Undocumented Student Coordinator, an official position to aid undocumented students with the college application process, and to support them through their college careers.
- Create leadership opportunities and career preparation support for undocumented students through events such as a job fair for DACA students.
- Training for counselors at the high school level

and for faculty and staff at the college level need to be improved so they better serve Latino students at both levels..

- Continue to fund programs in colleges and universities that support the retention, academics, and social life of Latino students.

Goal: “Equal access and support for Latino college students.”

8. Access to Healthcare

Moderator: **Alyshia Gálvez**, Associate Professor, Latin American, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies, Lehman College

Dennis Rivera, President, 1199SEIU, United Healthcare Workers East

Rafael Lantigua, MD, Director, General Medicine, Out-Patient Services, New York Presbyterian Hospital; and Member, Special Review Committee of the National Institute of Aging and Hispanic Aging and Health.

Rosa M. Gil, Executive Director, Comunilife, Inc.

Issues with healthcare involve dealing with systemic problems, such as culturally competent care, clear communication of the services available to the Latino community, and increasing the amount of access available. In the future, healthcare may be further jeopardized by the potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). According to Dennis Rivera, the ACA significantly increased access to healthcare, and it also helps protect those with pre-existing conditions. Those living below the poverty line are now entitled to healthcare. If the ACA is repealed, it will have a disastrous impact upon the entire U.S. healthcare system and economy, let alone the Latino community.

Recommendations

- Support the idea that healthcare is a right and not a privilege. Healthcare affects and is intertwined with every other issue in the Latino community — housing, transportation, income inequality,

education, and immigration. Increased access to healthcare can only ameliorate these other issues.

- Make the Latino community aware of the potential repeal of the ACA and urge them to be mobilized to support and defend it.
- Encourage members of the Latino community to pursue careers in the healthcare field and to provide programs that help immigrants with medical training transition into the field in the United States.

Goal: “Healthcare is a right for Latinos and for everyone else.”

9. Workforce Development and Workers’ Rights

Moderator: **Iris DeLutro**, Vice President, Cross Campus Units, PSC-CUNY and Senior Coordinator, Murphy Institute, LEAP-to-Teacher Program

Henry Garrido, Executive Director, District Council 37

Nadia Marin-Molina, associate director, New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH)

Gonzalo Mercado, Executive Director and founder, La Colmena Community Job Center, and New York coordinator, National Day Laborer Organizing Network

Patrick Purcell, Greater New York Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust

Latinos need access to good paying jobs. They make up nearly half of the New York City population but only account for 20% of civil service jobs. Of the highest paying jobs (*e.g.*, IT, management positions), only 2% are Latino. Also, the situation for undocumented workers is grim, as they are scared to report employer violations to OSHA. Day laborer centers are a major target of the Trump administration. Non-union jobs exploit Latinos the most, with a lack of enforcement of safety regulations and lack of collective bargaining power.

Recommendations

- Change the model for workforce development by creating hiring hall where a job only accepts applicants that come from within community where the job is being offered.
- Waive the \$280 fee charged to take the Civil Service Exams. Add more resources to train for civil service jobs and make sure there are jobs available for people who enter into training.
- Give immigrants more access to occupational training for jobs that are actually available.
- Encourage elected officials to support unions.
- Create a coalition among unions and all laborers.
- Make jobs available to those who are qualified within the community.
- Create democratic business models and worker co-ops where workers have more agency to protect their interests.

Goal: “Job access and protections for all Latinos.”

10. Interethnic/Race Relations and Coalition Building

Moderator: **Angela Fernández**, Esq., Executive Director, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights

Carmen De La Rosa, New York State Assembly, 72nd District

Santa Soriano-Vasquez, Director of Government Relations, Community Service Society

Murad Awawdeh, Director of Political Engagement, New York Immigration Coalition

Alondra Nelson, Professor of sociology and dean of Social Science, Columbia University

Not enough is taught about victories won through coalitions of disparate groups. For example, the Black Panthers and the Young Lords partnered in order to better understand the needs of their neighborhoods.

Groups with different goals and visions still have common aims that can be worked on together.

Recommendations

- Foster openness by disseminating ethnic statistics and encouraging people to look beyond their own communities to listen to and work with their fellow citizens and neighbors.
- Urge individuals and groups to use social media as a tool to communicate.
- Promote debate and critical constructive discussion on ethnic biases within the Latino communities.

Goal: “All Latinos united in action.”

11. Criminal Justice and Police-Community Relations

Moderator: **Jodie Roure**, JD, PhD, Associate Professor, Latin American and Latina/o Studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Carmen Dixon, race and policing reform organizer, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and Black Lives Matter, New York City Chapter

Stephanie Llanes, Fellow, Center for Constitutional Rights

Juan Ramos, Deputy Director, Crown Heights Mediation Center

Issues with policing and the Latino population lead to problems in every area of the community, including education, the school-to-prison pipeline, and mass incarceration reentry.

Recommendations

- Encourage city agencies to support the community heads in the face of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and new government policies that are get-tough laws and that revert back to mass incarcerations.
- Reimagine policing into something that is

not rooted in state-sanctioned violence and punishment. End Broken Windows policing and end Stop and Frisk.

- Educate our own children about our freedom struggles and our movements and restructure our educational system's curricular content offering to include this history.
- Encourage police to take community input more seriously.
- Advocate for more funding from City Council to support crime prevention programs.
- As an alternative to policing, invest in community-led initiatives and resources that address the issues of mental health, violence eradication, and homelessness, and ensure those solutions incorporate a full understanding of the impact of trauma.
- Hold police departments accountable to their reform and to diversity and cultural competency standards.

Goal: "Reimagine policing with partnering communities."

Conclusions

The kind of advocacy coalition represented at the Summit on Latin@s is of utmost importance in these divisive times and within this great city. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, Mexicans and Central and South Americans, academics and elected officials, service providers and concerned community members, we all need to focus on issues that affect each of us as well as all of us. More than ever, we need a shared voice, a shared set of goals, a shared agenda that allows us to speak with greater force on political matters and on social economic progress for our communities and for the entire New York City community.

With the recommendations reached at the summit, we can now go to elected officials, to unions, to community-based organizations with an action agenda and be able to say that this is where we stand as a community. We will say to everyone who wants the support of the Latino community that they will have to declare where they stand regarding these issues, issues that are a priority for the Latino community.

Save the Date!

06.01.18

Second Annual Summit on Latin@s in New York City

Friday, June 1, 2018
Hunter College,
Silberman School of Social Work

2180 Third Avenue
(at East 119th street)
New York, NY



