

Immigrant Integration in Los Angeles

Strategic Directions for Funders



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Acknowledgments

This report looks at the challenges and opportunities of immigrant integration in Los Angeles County. It seeks to frame the debate and future policy with a careful grounding in the facts, using data collected from both secondary sources and insights gleaned from a series of focus groups and interviews. The intended audience is broad – civic and business leaders, immigrant advocates, public officials, and other interested parties – but we make a special effort here to spell out what a philanthropic agenda might be for promoting immigrant integration here in Los Angeles.

As researchers and activists, we have long been committed to an expansive view of immigrants and their contribution to society – and so we begin our acknowledgments by simply thanking the California Community Foundation for giving us the opportunity and generous support to work on this project. We want to especially thank from the Foundation, Linda Wong, Virginia Mosqueda, Cathy Choi, Antonia Hernandez and Rachel Sonntag-Bloom for their support, participation and valuable input.

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Photo by: Kevin Ksen, Worcester Indymedia

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Executive Summary

With vibrant passion and strong language, the debate about immigration policy in the United States has often generated more heat than light. Lost in the flurry has been the recognition that in some regions, including metropolitan Los Angeles, the immigrant presence is more a fact than a talking point, and as much an opportunity as a challenge.

While Washington may focus on flows and borders, Los Angeles is marked by stocks and passages: one third of our residents are immigrants, nearly half of our workforce is foreign-born, and two-thirds of those under 18 are the children of immigrants. The fates of these immigrant workers, families, and their children, 90 percent of whom are U.S.-born, are not just their concern. How they fare will determine how we all fare in Southern California.

Earlier in American history, the task of effectively integrating immigrants was taken up by institutions such as settlement houses, unions, and urban political machines – and integration was helped by a thriving industrial sector that provided good and secure jobs to workers with modest skills. But many of these institutions have been weakened in subsequent years even as globalization has curtailed wage growth for those with a high school education or less.

Building on this recognition of immigrant presence, mutual interest, and changed circumstances, some community, business, and foundation leaders have begun to contemplate what role they can play in promoting immigrant integration at a local and regional level. This report explores such potential roles and investments in this arena in Los Angeles County and is the product of a combination of a review of the literature, secondary data analysis, and extensive discussions with community leaders.

What is Immigrant Integration?

Immigrant integration can be defined as improved economic mobility for, enhanced civic participation by, and receiving society openness to immigrants. Each of these dimensions is measurable and each reflects fundamental American values: opportunity in the case of economic mobility, democracy in the area of engagement, and openness reflected by host society attitudes and policies.

Implicit in this triplet of fundamental principles is yet another American value: the notion of mutual interests and mutual obligations. While often stuck in low-skill and low-wage employment, immigrant labor contributes over forty percent of our gross regional product and immigrant spending power is

nearly 36 percent of the region's total. Demographers predict that the aging of baby boomers will create an even more important role for immigrants in sustaining the economy and society. As a result, even U.S.-born residents have a vital stake in immigrant outcomes, particularly in immigrant-rich metros like Los Angeles.

At the same time, immigrant families and communities need to meet the demands implicit in becoming part of our regional landscape: learning English, pursuing education, and getting involved in local decision-making. To do this, they will need support, through investments in expanding educational opportunities and job training for all ages, a developed community-based immigrant leadership that can network and coalesce effectively with others, and enhanced capacities of agencies and governments that serve a changing population.

But no comprehensive program for immigrant integration should focus only on immigrants. We need to also encourage inter-ethnic communication, and most of all, a new narrative about our common destiny. The latter is a “soft” investment – some may think we need to put money into services not stories – but it is critical to encourage the openness and receptivity that will allow immigrants and the broader community to strive and thrive together.

Who are the Immigrants?

While the popular discourse about immigrants in the Southland conjures up images of undocumented Mexicans, Los Angeles has actually seen the share of Mexicans, as a percent of immigrants, decline over time; of those County residents who arrived in the last ten years or less, only 36 percent are from Mexico. Newer immigrants, particularly from China, Korea, the Philippines, Armenia, Central America, and Africa, have become increasingly present, with each community facing particular challenges and nuances. And while the current refugee population is relatively small and has been declining nationally, it is expected to rise in coming years, particularly with newcomers from Iraq.

Immigrants are generally a younger population, with the most recent arrivals tending to cluster in the prime working age population of those in their mid-twenties to mid-fifties. Labor force participation rates for immigrants are high, with rates for immigrant men exceeding those of U.S.-born men. Labor participation rates are lower for immigrant women than for U.S.-born women, but less so for those who are long-term immigrants — surprising, given the higher probability that immigrant women are parents.

The immigrant community has spread geographically in recent years, with

a reach well beyond the traditional entry points of East Los Angeles and mid-city to areas like the San Fernando Valley, the San Gabriel Valley, and South Central. Smaller cities often find themselves unprepared for the scale of the population changes and struggle to provide necessary services or engage new residents in civic processes. More settled immigrants are spreading even further around the County as economic success often translates into movement away from the central city and the inner ring suburbs immediately adjoining to the city.

Within the region's urban core, the demographic transformation in South Central has been of particular interest. For example, the seven major public high schools in that area went from 85 percent African American in the early 1980s to over 70 percent Latino today, partly because of an influx of immigrant families. Alongside the experience of residential change and Black job loss in key industries, this shift in population has triggered a set of tensions that has roiled community politics, despite the efforts of innovative organizations to create new spaces for dialogue and sharing.

Los Angeles is also home to the largest undocumented population in any American metropolis. Of the estimated one million undocumented in the County, nearly 60 percent are of

Mexican origin – but given the popular conception that all undocumented are Mexican and that all Mexicans are undocumented, this merely highlights the diversity of the unauthorized population. Los Angeles also has a more settled population than most of America's metros – although nearly 50 percent of our undocumented residents have been here 10 years or less – and our own lower-bound estimates suggest that at least 15 percent of children in Los Angeles County are living in families with at least one parent facing status issues.

Finally, immigrants comprise 46 percent of the workforce in Los Angeles, making them integral to the growth of the local and regional economy. Because of this, recent attempts by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to target employers with a significant number of immigrant workers have worried business leaders, some of whom recently joined with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to ask ICE to stop raids of otherwise law-abiding companies. And it isn't just the downside of losing workers that motivates concern: the large size of the immigrant workforce means that targeted efforts to raise their skills and wages now will pay off in overall regional productivity and prosperity tomorrow.

And while labor matters, it isn't the only side of the equation motivating

business and economic leaders: While the incomes of the foreign-born population tend to be lower than their native-born counterparts, their sheer numbers translates to a buying power that is a major contributor to our economic health. This is true because they still need to buy food, other staple items, consumer goods and services in general. In the aggregate, they are akin to the “emerging markets” of developing countries and have become the focal points for significant financial investments and business development.

How are They Doing?

One of the most striking facts about immigrants in Los Angeles County is how rooted they are in the region. Sixty-three percent of those who migrated over 30 years ago own their own home, a rate eight points above that of U.S.-born residents. While there are differences in immigrant home ownership patterns by national origin, Latino immigrants who have been here for 30 years have rates very similar to those of U.S.-born whites, even though Latinos exhibit the lowest rates of home acquisition of all immigrants.

This evidence of economic mobility is echoed by examining the income of long-term residents. While the probability of being in higher — and middle-income quintiles is lower for long-term immigrants than it is for U.S.-born residents, the gap is not large.

Meanwhile, generational progress in English proficiency seems to be as alive and well as in earlier eras in American history. In addition, immigrant entrepreneurship seems to be thriving, with rates of self-employment for immigrants well above those for the native-born of the same ethnic groups.

That we do not often see this progress is attributable to what USC demographer Dowell Myers calls the ‘Peter Pan’ fallacy: we assume that immigrants never age and that their outcomes will be those that we associate with the most recent and struggling immigrants. Yet immigrant integration is all about aging gracefully and productively in ways that will contribute to immigrant well-being, broader social stability, and regional economic prosperity.

Of course, immigrants do face numerous economic challenges. Foremost among these is English acquisition, a skill that often raises wages by 15 to 20 percent and opens the doors to other sorts of job training and employment opportunities. Yet there is a striking shortage of such English learning opportunities for adults, and it is a problem that also indirectly affects children. Of those primary school children identified as English learners, nearly 80 percent are U.S.-born and likely living in households where English is a desired but often distant second language.

Even immigrants with English abilities and high educational attainment can face barriers. The Migration Policy Institute notes that around 40 percent of college-educated immigrants from Latin America and a quarter of college-educated residents from Asia find themselves stuck in low-wage employment. Labor market experts attribute this to the problem of ‘credentialing’ – that is, the phenomenon in which degrees obtained abroad are discounted or not recognized by U.S. employers – and suggest that employers and governments need to find ways to better recognize and reward skills.

Immigrants also face challenges with regard to civic participation. Many are reluctant to engage with governmental authorities because of distrust brought from their home countries. While improving rates of naturalization and increasing numbers of voters points to great possibilities, local governments find it sometimes difficult to solicit immigrant voices in planning and other processes. Taking a coordinated approach to this is tough because governmental responsibility is highly fragmented, particularly in the sprawling political landscape of Los Angeles County.



What is Needed Now?

While data analysis can provide a backdrop, filling in the picture requires listening to grassroots groups who work every day on issues affecting immigrants and the broader community. To do this, we convened focus groups drawing from a variety of constituencies, including immigrant rights advocates, business leaders and workforce developers, funders and foundation officers, city planners and elected officials, labor and community organizers, and interethnic coalition-builders.

We expected to hear a range of concerns – and we did – but there was also striking agreement on several key areas. Most evident was the need to shift the ‘frame’ of the current dialogue to emphasize the assets that immigrants bring to our communities. The importance of investing in leadership development in both immigrant and U.S.-born communities was also mentioned as a crucial focus area. Finally, the significance of focusing on key policies, particularly in the areas of education, job training, and civic engagement which could indicate models that work.

The ‘frame’ around immigrants is fundamental: if we simply visualize immigrants as a problem to be tackled, we are unlikely to build the political will to invest in communities and will instead have a discourse dominated by the hope that the ‘problem’ will someday go away. It will not and it is not actually a problem: front-line business leaders stressed their long-term reliance on an increasingly immigrant workforce, union leaders highlighted how their organizing gains had come through the actions of immigrant labor, and city planners and community developers noted how urban revitalization is often driven by immigrant energy.

That this is not the dominant story in the public imagination is partly due to politics but it is also due to information gaps. Focus group participants stressed the need

for research that could both make the case about immigrant contributions and create a common ground understanding of mutual interest between communities and generations. Data alone will not be sufficient. Rather, public dissemination strategies and the convening of local leadership from multiple sectors are critical to having a new “frame” become a new shared narrative.

Thus, leadership development in multiple communities is crucial. It is easy to point to relative leadership gaps in immigrant communities as many have very young and still maturing organizations. There are also many places, like South Central, where a large immigrant population is not matched by an equally large number of institutions and groups that can broadly articulate and represent their interests. Investing in capacity-building for community-based organizations is therefore an important part of improving civic climate.

But the problem of leadership does not just lie on the immigrant side. We need to encourage a shift in attitudes and an equally new set of leadership skills on the part of the receiving communities. A new macro-level public information strategy will help at the regional level but we also need a well-constructed set of micro-level programs that can bring immigrant and U.S.-born leaders together to hash out their common objectives and common future.

Especially important, we need to continue investing in African American organizations, both because they are looking for help as they adjust to new immigrant constituencies in their service areas and because they have been the bedrock for many efforts aimed at community development and social justice in increasingly immigrant communities.

Finally, Americans are a pragmatic lot. We may be driven by lofty ideals of opportunity, democracy, and openness but we only support what may actually work. Thus, we can learn from specific successful policies adopted by comprehensive immigrant integration efforts in Illinois, the Silicon Valley, and elsewhere. Most critical among these policies is the enhancement of English language capacities of immigrant families and their children – something that we know how to do but that is both underfunded and stymied by complicated lines of government authority.

Job training programs are also critical and require business and government to step up their efforts. Such programs need to be redesigned to meet immigrant needs, particularly for those who are already working long hours in low-wage jobs. The credentialing issue also deserves attention, with specific efforts needed to help employers assess and reward education obtained abroad. Meanwhile, civic engagement should

be encouraged by reaching out to new populations in multiple languages and being sensitive to different needs and styles of interaction.

What Can Funders Do?

These are a broad set of tasks which should be taken up by multiple actors. Business-labor collaborations around job training, interjurisdictional cooperation around service provision, and improvements in education for immigrant children are needed. There are exciting examples of such efforts in Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas. But what can and should foundations do, particularly at a regional level?

Specific strategies should be rooted in our basic values of improving opportunity, enhancing democracy, and encouraging openness, values that imply action in terms of encouraging mobility, engagement, and the degree of social receptivity. If we see these as the three basic dimensions of a grantmaking strategy then concrete activities and measurable outcomes, specific goals and objectives for the proposed grantmaking priorities might include the following:

Increase opportunities for economic mobility for immigrants, their families and their communities, by:

- Supporting the economic advancement of immigrants in

the workforce through English language acquisition, workforce and business development, and the recognition of the educational credentials of foreign-trained workers;

- Increasing opportunities for families and children of immigrants by working to improve K-12 education and by specifically promoting parental involvement in schools; and
- Investing in African American communities and organizations in increasingly immigrant communities so as to complete the economic and social integration of neglected native populations.

Enhance civic participation opportunities for immigrants by:

- Building leadership skills through the use of proven models, experimentation with new models, and active learning from leadership training experiences in other regions;
- Increasing political participation through support of naturalization, as well as encouraging immigrant residents to participate in local planning processes and assisting city authorities in developing appropriate outreach; and
- Supporting multi-ethnic, multi-sector, and multi-agency convening processes that can help immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as leaders from the diverse

immigrant populations, build a firm basis for collaboration and participation.

Foster openness in the broader society towards immigrants and their families by:

- Supporting organizations that seek to reframe the debate and provide a balanced view of immigrant contributions to the local regional economy and society;
- Helping local governments understand that immigrant integration is a core responsibility and assisting officials who are finding ways to work across often complicated jurisdictional lines; and
- Supporting groups that organize around common issues that span all the diverse immigrant and non-immigrant populations, and can help various communities see their mutual regional interests.

What is the Funder Role?

While some of the recommendations above include supporting specific service delivery programs, foundations can also play a role as convenors of leadership, providers of information, investors in models, and movers of policy.

Convening and Developing Leadership

Foundations can launch a series of efforts to convene leadership to work in the areas

of the economy, civic engagement, and social reception. They can, for example, help create conversations about workforce needs that would bring business, unions, and workforce trainers together to review best practice strategies for up-skilling immigrant workers. Regional foundations can, as noted above, bring agencies together across cities to understand why and how immigrant integration should be a core government responsibility. And they could convene a broad range of civic leadership to raise public consciousness on the issue.

Foundations can also help to develop the leadership to be convened. This involves investing in training programs in a wide variety of community-based organizations, supporting efforts to naturalize immigrants and encourage electoral participation, and working with city agencies to open public participation processes to non-citizen residents. But it also means bringing leaders together to understand their mutual interests – and funders are often in a unique position to command the respect and attention of multiple strands of leadership.

Providing and Framing Information

Foundations have an important potential role in dispelling myths and educating the public about the facts of immigrant integration. Part of

this involves the development of new research capacity, perhaps through a series of allied institutions that can focus on the facts of immigrant integration and also document and assess emerging successful practices. But it also involves the creation of a new ability to create and disseminate messages about immigrant contributions, immigrant progress, and the interdependence of long-time and recent residents.

This does not mean supporting a Pollyannaish view of immigration: there are real issues of displacement, cultural change, and competition that will require honest analysis and discussion. But by supporting the development of information, leadership, and dialogue, foundations can create the groundwork for what some have termed “the highest common ground” – an understanding of mutual interests forged not by shallow agreement but by the hard work of conversation and compromise.

Investing in and Promoting Models

Foundations can also lead the way to best practices and programs by investing in model community-based literacy programs, stellar efforts to engage immigrant parents in their children’s education, and unique and unexpected coalitions amongst community organizations. This list can easily be expanded to other areas, including

health, workforce, and urban planning, but the point here is simply for funders to be conscious about investing in, then disseminating the lessons from innovative programs.

Such promotion is important because immigrant integration has become an issue of real concern to many philanthropies. This implies that funders should themselves practice collaboration and learning, sharing the lessons from their programs quickly and broadly to other funders and other regions. The overall goal should be to spread knowledge of effective practices that can generate a more productive future for immigrants and the larger society.

Moving and Shaping Policy

Model programs will not be enough – policies must change as well. Foremost among these is national immigration reform. For example, if we do not eventually craft an immigration policy that includes a path to citizenship, nearly ten percent of the Los Angeles County population and an even larger share of its workers will be in permanent and dangerous limbo. Foundations can and should help move a national agenda by investing in community organizations that are working on state and national policy, and supporting the efforts of those who are protecting communities from the excesses of current policy.

Foundations should also support direct policy change at a local or metropolitan level. Regional funders can easily lead at this level by convening local government actors and helping them identify obstacles standing in the way of effective service delivery to immigrant communities. This is not an easy task – the fragmentation that affects immigrant families affects many other realms of public policy – but it is nonetheless crucial.

What Do We Stand to Gain?

America has long been celebrated as a nation of immigrants. This is a bit misleading – we had a sizeable and eventually displaced indigenous population, not all who came to our shores were willing migrants, and some populations just happened to live on land we annexed. Nonetheless, this telling myth is rooted in the reality of many residents and it has been a crucial part of our national ethos.

We often think the resulting America, one characterized by growth, prosperity, and opportunity, was just the happy consequence of a nearly automatic process of assimilation. But the truth is that the emergence of unions and the strength of business allowed many immigrants to move from the working class to the middle class. Strong investments in education at all levels allowed their children to achieve success in college and

become professionals. Finally, a series of strategies, including federal lending programs and Social Security, allowed these families and their children to own homes and attain some degree of benefits at retirement.

The nation stands at a crossroads and Los Angeles is spinning in the vortex of change. Regardless of what happens in Washington, the future of our region is now deeply connected to the fates of large numbers of local immigrants and their children. We can let ourselves drift to division and disappointment, or we can work together to build on the assets of immigrant communities and forge common bonds between cities and constituencies. We can ignore the economic dynamism of immigrant

workers and entrepreneurs or we can change policies and programs to insure that such efforts can create a better life for the region as a whole.

Immigrant integration is not a special program or a special interest. It is a common effort that can benefit us all and it is one that will resonate with our deepest values of economic mobility, democratic participation, and openness to people and their ideas. However, it will require leadership in an era when other institutions, including government, have lost their way. Funders can be an important part of that leadership; stirring other actors and institutions as together we find our way to a brighter and more inclusive future for all residents.

Introduction

“Immigration is a federal policy, but immigrant integration is a local responsibility.”

*– Policy and Planning Focus
Group Participant*

The failure of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform has generated uncertainty about the direction of immigration legislation. However, the stalemate in Washington does not change the facts on the ground. In many areas of the country, the growing presence of immigrants and their children has become both crucial to regional economic success and a source of social friction.

The resulting localization of immigration policy has unsettled communities. State legislatures throughout the country have introduced over 1500 pieces of legislation that seek to address immigration enforcement. Cities and counties have experienced heated discussions about immigrant overcrowding, unregulated day labor sites, and the use of English in schools and workplaces.¹ Those working closely with immigrant communities – and those who believe that better incorporating immigrants into mainstream institutions and society can lead to their economic and social success,

¹ Dirk Hegen, “2007 Enacted State Legislation Related to Immigrants and Immigration,” National Conference of State Legislatures, (Immigrant Policy Project, November 29, 2007), <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/2007immigrationfinal.htm>.

and help to revitalize local and regional economies – have been upset with the tenor of these local debates. However, they have not as often sketched out a full alternative that can promote successful immigrant integration.

Los Angeles County is especially pressed to offer such an alternative. One-third of our residents are immigrants, half of our workforce is foreign-born, and nearly two-thirds of those under the age of 18 are the children of immigrants. How we fare as a region and a society depends on whether these children are educated, these families are prosperous, and these communities find a civic voice. And given the bellwether status of Los Angeles as an immigrant entry point, what happens in Los Angeles will set precedence for how regions throughout the nation will approach immigrant integration.

This report is based on the research of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at the University of Southern California (USC) and is intended to complement a report by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) entitled “Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County.” We add to that excellent work in two main ways. First, we supplement the data developed by MPI with the most recent releases of quantitative data including the American Community Survey (ACS) and analyze and map indicators especially relevant to

Los Angeles. Second, we bring in community voices, utilizing results from convenings of six small groups of selected stakeholders and numerous interviews.

Our main findings are straightforward. First, Los Angeles County has a large and increasingly diverse presence of immigrants and their families – and while there are clearly problems and obstacles to be overcome, immigrants also exhibit long-term socio-economic mobility traditional to the American experience. Second, there is a widespread sense that immigrants participate in and contribute significantly to our economy and society. From business community leaders to immigrant rights activists to labor union organizers to city officials and planners, we found a surprisingly common recognition of the need to facilitate immigrant integration and through this, to improve the regional economy and society.



Elisha Lee and classmates celebrate multicultural day at Hancock Park Elementary School.

Photo by Elaine Lee.

Third, there is a striking emphasis amongst all stakeholders on “soft” investments: improvements in messaging about immigrants, development of leadership in immigrant communities, and capacity-building for interethnic cooperation and collaboration. Fourth, there is remarkable consensus on some of the key “hard” or service-oriented investments: new mechanisms for

civic participation by immigrants, new programs (especially English acquisition) for workers who need skills to improve their status in the labor market, and significant improvements in education that can help prepare children for adulthood.

Finally, there is a strong desire among multiple sectors to see the conversation shift and for measurable change to take place. Regardless of what may occur at the national level, Los Angeles appears ready for something different. We see a recognition that we really are in this together and that our civic health will depend on a two-way commitment to each other and an honest discussion of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We begin the document by providing a landscape of the immigrant populations in Los Angeles County, especially the diversity and changing nature of the populations. The data also tends to highlight key challenges, including issues of English language acquisition, the inability to translate home country educational credentials into host country

earnings, and neighborhood-level demographic shifts that have frequently triggered tensions. We then turn to a review of the focus groups and interviews, highlighting the participants' emphasis on changing the regional narrative around immigration, investing in leadership development, and creating a series of concrete strategies that can improve economic and social mobility.

We conclude the report with recommendations for the field of philanthropy. We organize these into three areas: improvements in immigrant economic outcomes, enhancement of immigrant civic engagement, and shifts in the receiving society's attitudes and strategies. We argue that this approach builds on fundamental American values of mobility, democracy and openness. By returning to these core values with new approaches we can take the venom out of the current discussion of immigration and create new opportunities to build upon our mutual interest in a greater county, state, and country.

The State of Immigrant Los Angeles

“Immigrants have a tremendous belief in America and the opportunities it presents.”

– Business Focus Group Participant

Immigrant integration is an important but sometimes elusive concept.

Traditionally, immigrant integration has referred to a multi-generational process of assimilation where individuals blend into mainstream culture, forgo much of their own cultural and ethnic identity, and advance economically and socially over time. But the increasingly globalized world keeps connections with home countries fresh and host countries value the ability to navigate various languages and cultures. Thus, the simple notion of integration as assimilation needs to be nuanced.

To frame this paper, we suggest a working definition with the following three key elements:

- **Measurability:** Immigrant integration can be defined as improved economic mobility for, enhanced civic participation by, and receiving society openness to immigrants. Progress around immigrant integration can and should be measured with benchmarks and indicators that include economic, civic, and social dimensions of how the
- quality of life for immigrants and their families is improving.
- **Intentionality:** Immigrant integration requires an intentional process that incorporates the needs of immigrant populations into policies governing our cities, regions and states. While there is a view that immigrants assimilated “all on their own” in an earlier era, in fact institutions like unions and settlement houses provided significant assistance. With such institutions waning, we need new intentional efforts and institutions to support them.
- **Transformation:** Immigrant integration is a dynamic two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society are both transformed as they work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities. It requires immigrants to transform themselves as they adapt to local civic culture; which in turn indicates the need for non-immigrants to feel comfortable with how their community is changing and necessitates a new frame that stresses mutual benefit, not homogenization.

Dowell Myers in his book, *Boomers and Immigrants*, examines the mutual benefit argument for California. He argues that aging baby boomers’ incipient demands on retirement and healthcare

The Little Hoover Commission

The need and importance of immigrant integration policies has been widely recognized. In 2002 the Little Hoover Commission wrote a report recommending policies affecting immigrants to be linked to community priorities so as to accelerate the transition from newcomer to responsible community member. Their three recommendations for California were:

California should establish goals for immigrant integration and create incentives for immigrants to fully participate in their communities.

- Establish the Golden State Residency Program to encourage immigrants to establish residency and become citizens.
- Develop a public awareness campaign on the rights and responsibilities of immigrants.

California must prudently invest in immigrants who make a commitment to become citizens.

- Align public policy with community goals through the Golden State Residency Program.
- Ensure that state programs effectively support community goals.
- Create the California Commission on Immigrants to create dialogue, and advocacy for effective programs.

California should advocate for federal reforms that link immigration policies to community goals, create incentives for immigrants to be responsible community members and encourage immigrants to work toward citizenship.

- Advocate for immigration reform, naturalization reform, federal support of community priorities, and more efficient and effective immigration and naturalization services.

Source: Little Hoover Commission, “We the People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians,” Report #166, (June 2002).

systems is a bigger issue for America than the cultural changes brought by new arrivals. We will actually need more immigrants and for settled immigrants to do well economically and socially in order to pay taxes, contribute to health insurance, and buy the houses of retired boomers. He suggests a new “social compact.” Reframing immigration as helpful to our future was echoed in the focus groups we discuss below.

The mutual benefit argument may be especially strong in Los Angeles. As noted earlier, one in three residents and nearly half the workforce is foreign-born — and the latter percentage will continue to climb as the existing population ages. This data reflects a fairly settled national immigrant population. However, in gateway regions like major cities in the American South and Los Angeles, new immigrants will swell the population. Within the County, while 64 percent of all children are those of immigrants, nearly 90 percent are also U.S. citizens. As they age, their incomes will be supporting baby boomers and their immigrant parents.

In short, both the data and multiple sectors recognize that immigrants are critical to the region and are here to stay. From immigrant rights activists to business leaders, everyone

agrees that immigrants are integral to the success of Los Angeles County. Another point of consensus was that immigrants in the region are extremely diverse by country of origin, language, and family documentation status. Thus, we need to move away from a one-size-fits-all strategy and towards more comprehensive, holistic initiatives – but to do this, we need to understand the complexity of the immigrant landscape in Los Angeles County.

The Geography of Immigration in Los Angeles County

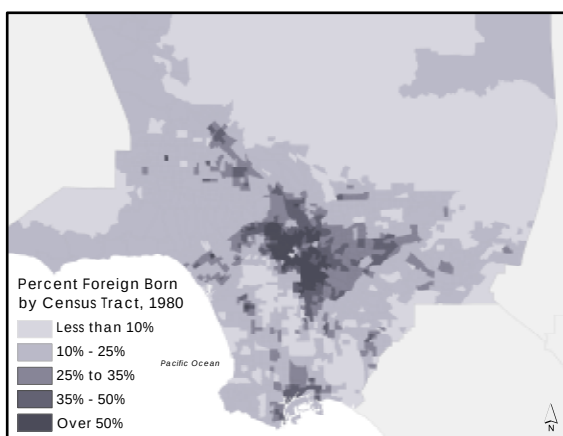
Where do these diverse foreign-born populations live in Los Angeles? Data from the U.S. Census shows that immigrants have been dispersed throughout the County over the last 20

years. In 1980, the highest concentrations – over 50 percent of the people residing in each census tract were foreign-born – were limited to MacArthur Park/Pico Union, East Los Angeles and Huntington Park. Of the remaining County, many areas had concentrations of 10-35 percent foreign-born. The dispersal has always been great but over time more of the County has become home to immigrants and at increasing concentrations throughout. Map 1 provides a picture of the foreign-born population's settlement patterns from 1980 and 2000, with the darker the color representing higher percentages of foreign-born residents.

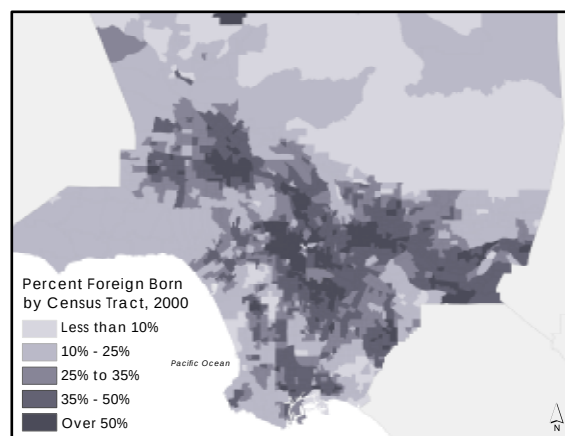
In 2000 (Map 1b), we find an increased and slightly more dispersed foreign-born population. Historic immigrant enclaves

Map 1. Foreign-born Population by Census Tract in Los Angeles County.

a. 1980



b. 2000



Source: PERE analysis of the Census Tiger/Line Files, 1980 Census and Census 2000.

remain as before, namely MacArthur Park/Pico Union and East Los Angeles; however, concentrations are rising in the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. It is notable that a significant number of Los Angeles County census tracts fall into the second highest range of density, with 35-50 percent of the population being foreign-born.

Maps 1a and 1b were created at the census tract level and draw on the Decennial Census, in particular what are called “Summary Files,” from 1980 and 2000. With immigrant presence rapidly changing, we derived most of our analysis from the 2005 and 2006 American Community Survey (ACS). The annual ACS nationwide survey allows users to extract detailed information regarding demographics, housing, social, and economic characteristics. ACS data provides a much more current description of the County’s immigrant population than the Decennial Census. However, given the degree of specificity that can be drawn from this data source, the ACS aggregates survey responses to a larger geographic entity called the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) to help avoid disclosing any identifying information about specific households and individuals. PUMAs contain a minimum population of 100,000; and it is our unit of analysis for the subsequent maps offered below.²

² Note that we have also combined the 2005 and 2006 ACS (using appropriate weights from each year) as a way of expanding the sample size.

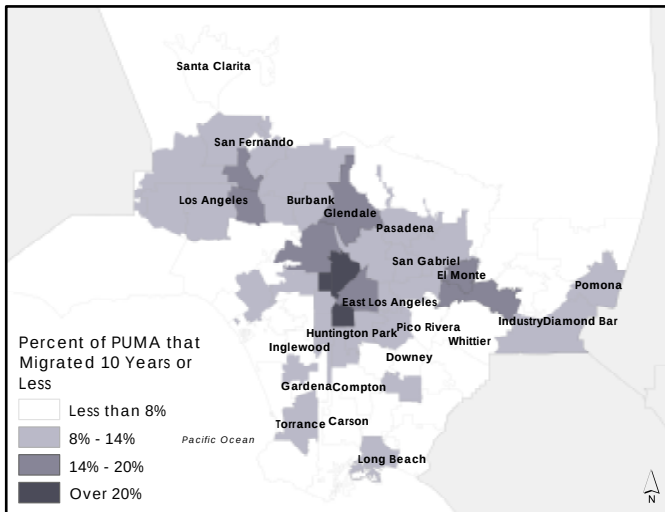
We use PUMA geography to look at the immigrant population broken down by how recently they migrated to the County. Maps 2a-d show the history of immigrant settlement. For example, in 2a we can see that MacArthur Park and Huntington Park have the highest concentrations of newly arrived immigrants, followed by Glendale, Hollywood, and Van Nuys. The former have over 20 percent foreign-born populations and the latter have 14 to 20 percent foreign-born. Here, we consider migration in the last 10 years or less to be newly arrived immigrants. Those who migrated within the last 11 to 20 years (see Map 2b) are living in high concentrations in these same areas but extend as well to San Gabriel and El Monte.

Once migrants have settled (i.e., those that migrated between 21 and 30 years ago depicted in Map 2c), the concentration of immigrants living in the PUMAs decreases but the dispersal increases. With the exception of San Gabriel Valley with a concentration of 14 to 20 percent immigrants, there is a corridor of immigrants at a lower concentration (8 to 14 percent) that

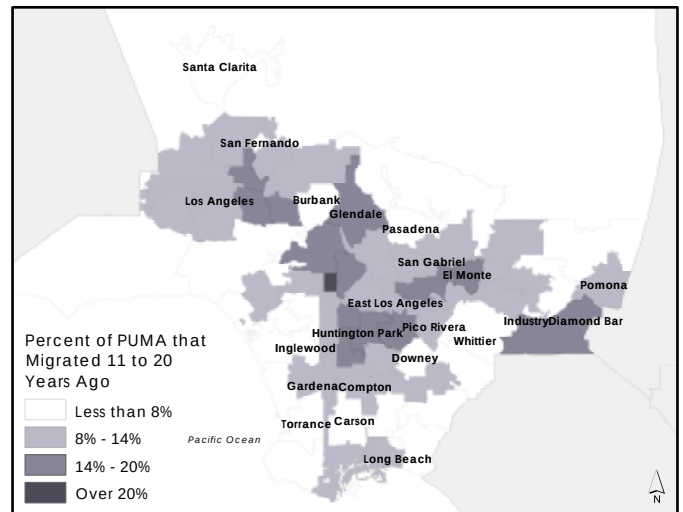
Technically, the summary version of the ACS draws on over two percent of the population; however, the individual files made available to researchers only include one percent. Pooling two years increases the sample size and improves the reliability of any set of estimates that we offer.

Map 2. Immigrant Settlement Patterns Based on Data of Migration Throughout Los Angeles.

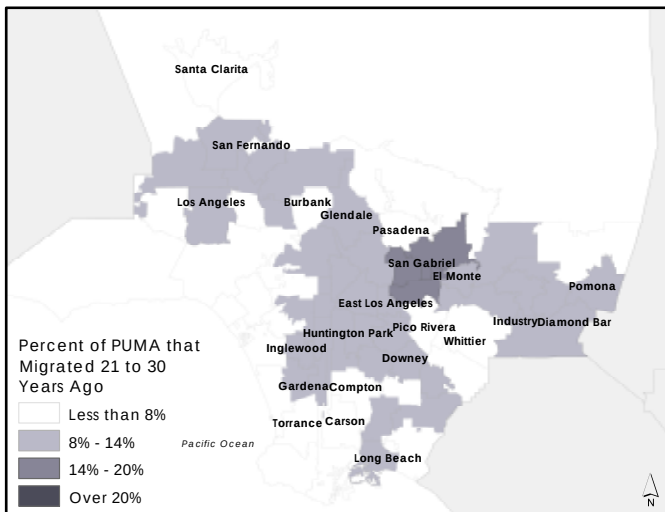
a. 10 years or less



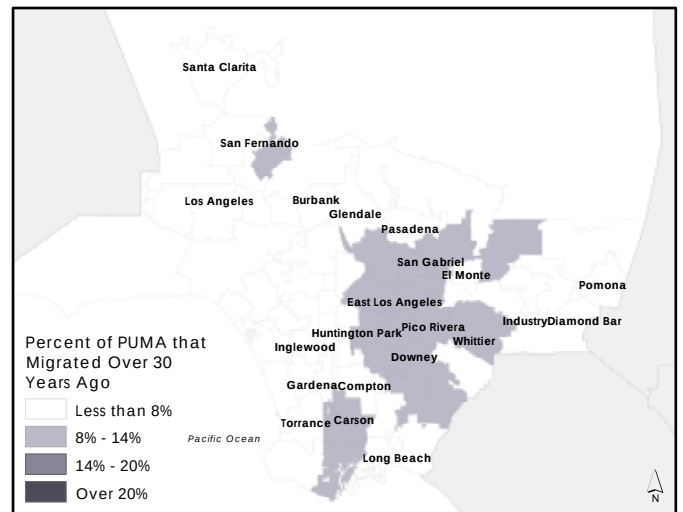
b. 11-20 years



c. 21-30 years



d. Over 30 years



Source: PERE analysis of the Census Tiger/Line Files and 2006 American Community Survey.

extends diagonally through the center of the region: from the North Valley through the San Fernando Valley, Hollywood, Central City, and the San Gabriel Valley and south through

South Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Huntington Park and over to Downey, Lakewood and Long Beach. For immigrants that came to Los Angeles over 30 years ago (see Map 2d), we see

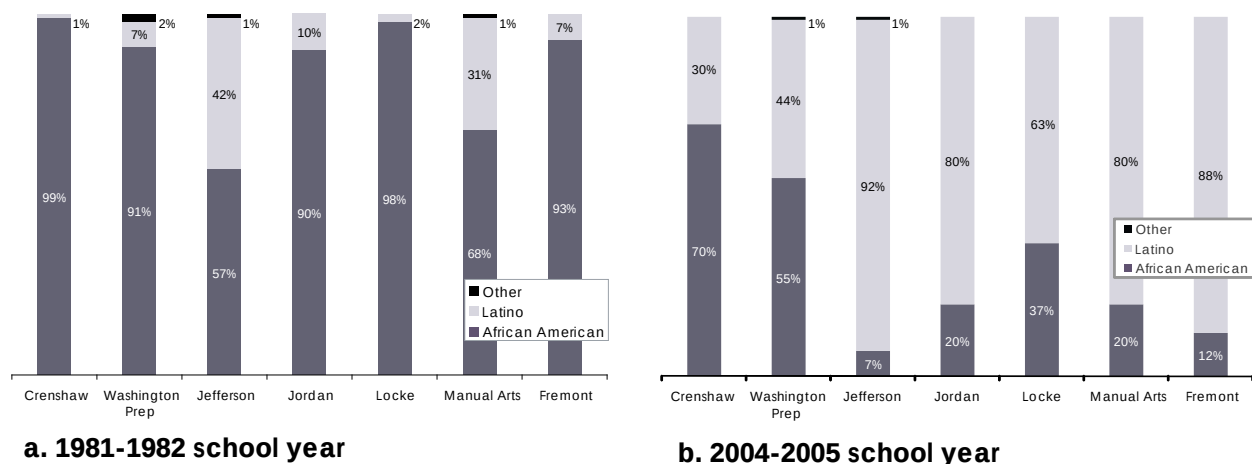
the highest concentrations other than San Fernando starting only as West as downtown and extending through East Los Angeles to Whittier, San Gabriel and down to Downey, Paramount, and Norwalk and hopping over to Carson and San Pedro.

This influx and settlement of foreign-born populations has increasingly changed the ethnic distribution of historic enclaves. For example, while South Los Angeles is the historic heart of Black Los Angeles, it is now mainly Latino. The set of census tracts in South Central, for example, went from being 76 percent African American and 20 percent Latino in 1980 to being 39 percent African American and 58 percent Latino in 2000 – and the demographic transformation has continued over the last six years since the Census.

School system data strongly demonstrates this transformation. Below, we show the percentages of African American and Latino students attending seven South Central high schools. The first part of Figure 1 shows the percentages from the 1981-1982 school year and the second part is from the 2004-2005 school year. The differently shaded areas represent African American and Latino students, respectively.

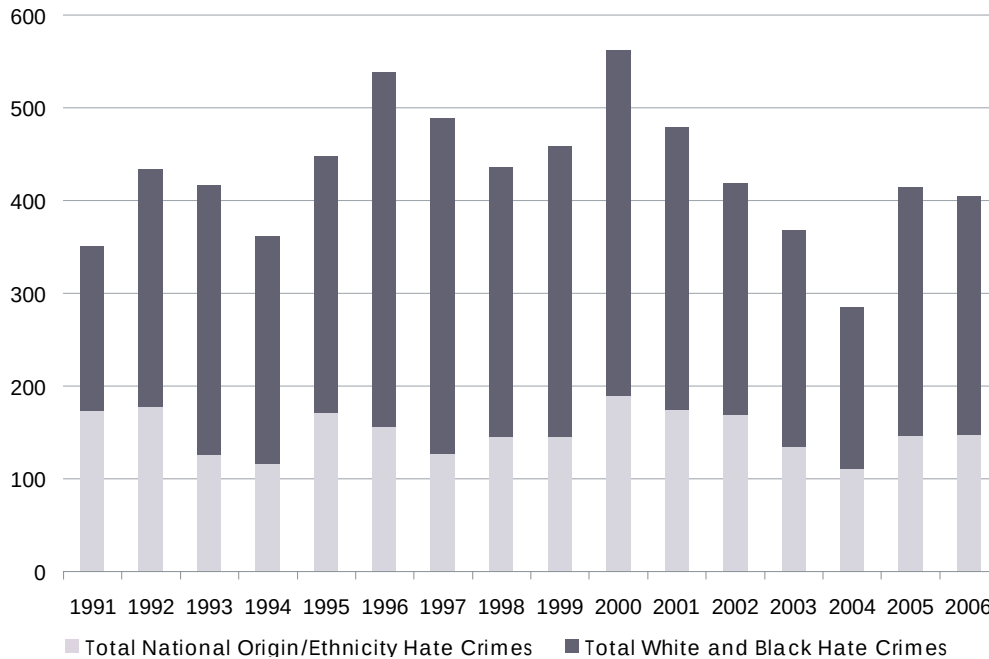
Among the most dramatic of the changes, the data shows that in 1981 Locke High School was 98 percent African American and 2 percent Latino, while during the 2004 school year its composition was 37 percent African American and 63 percent Latino. Similar changes can be seen at the other South Los Angeles High Schools on the graph below.

Figure 1. African American and Latino Students at South Central Los Angeles Schools.



Source: California Department of Education's California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) 1981-2005.

Figure 2. Racial/Ethnic/National Origin Hate Crimes 1991-2006 in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commissions Hate Crime Report.

Residents of these historic enclaves and immigrant communities find themselves in tension over these demographic transformations. Figure 2 demonstrates some of this tension as it manifests itself through hate crimes as reported by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission. However, the graph suggests that the correlation between hate crimes and economic or societal stresses (the recessions of the early 1990s and early 2000s, and the polarized debate over Proposition 209 and Affirmative Action in 1996) seems stronger than that between hate crimes

and slow and inexorable demographic changes. This is particularly worrisome given the harsh tenor of the recent debates about immigration and the high likelihood of economic slowdown that looms over the County and the country. In addition, it highlights the important need for local governments across public sectors to take on the responsibility of immigrant integration. Resolution of these tensions will only happen with a deliberate, concerted effort from municipal government, school districts and other civic and community leadership working together.

The Diversity of Immigrants in Los Angeles County

“There are companies that are going to need a local workforce and are going to be invested in the issue.”

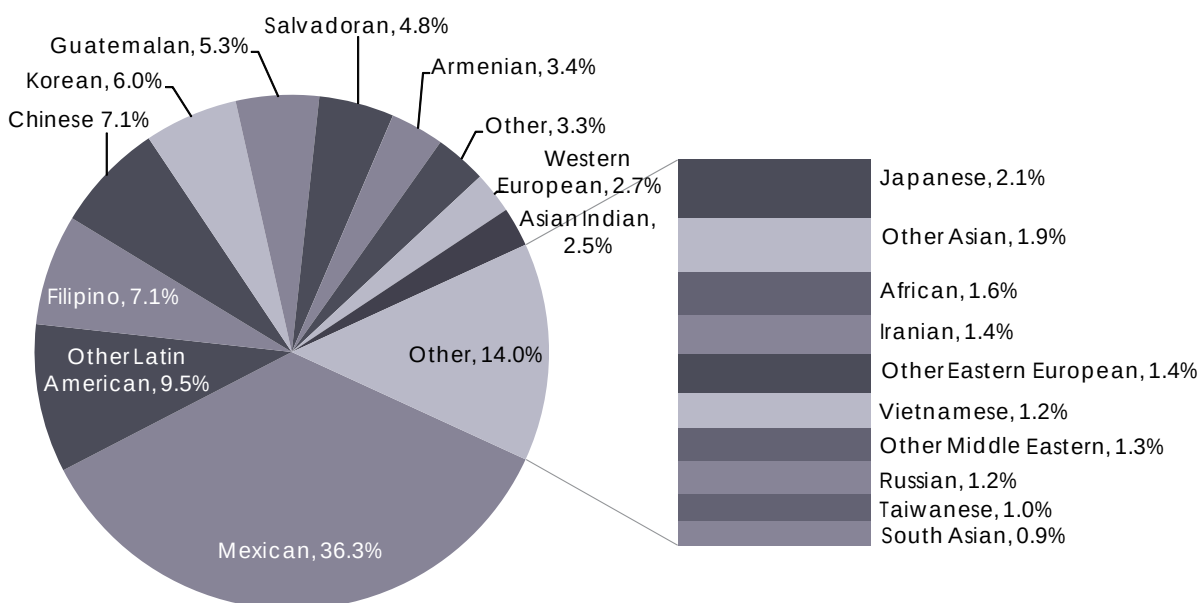
– Business Group Participant

Popular misperceptions plague the debate around immigration. Top on the list is that “immigrant” means Mexican. Although Mexicans do comprise the largest share of foreign-born in the area, the relative presence of Mexican immigrants has been decreasing. Mexicans comprised 44.6 percent of immigrants that migrated to the United States over 30 years ago. Figure 3 below

shows that Mexican immigrants made up only 36.3 percent of immigrants who migrated in the last ten years or less. Further, the number of immigrants from Western Europe and other Latin American countries has decreased. In that same cohort, immigrants from China, the Philippines, Guatemala, Korea, Armenia and South Asia have comprised a larger share than before. Understanding the full impacts of this diversity – and not just designing programs that will serve Spanish speakers – is a major challenge for service providers, city planners, and others.

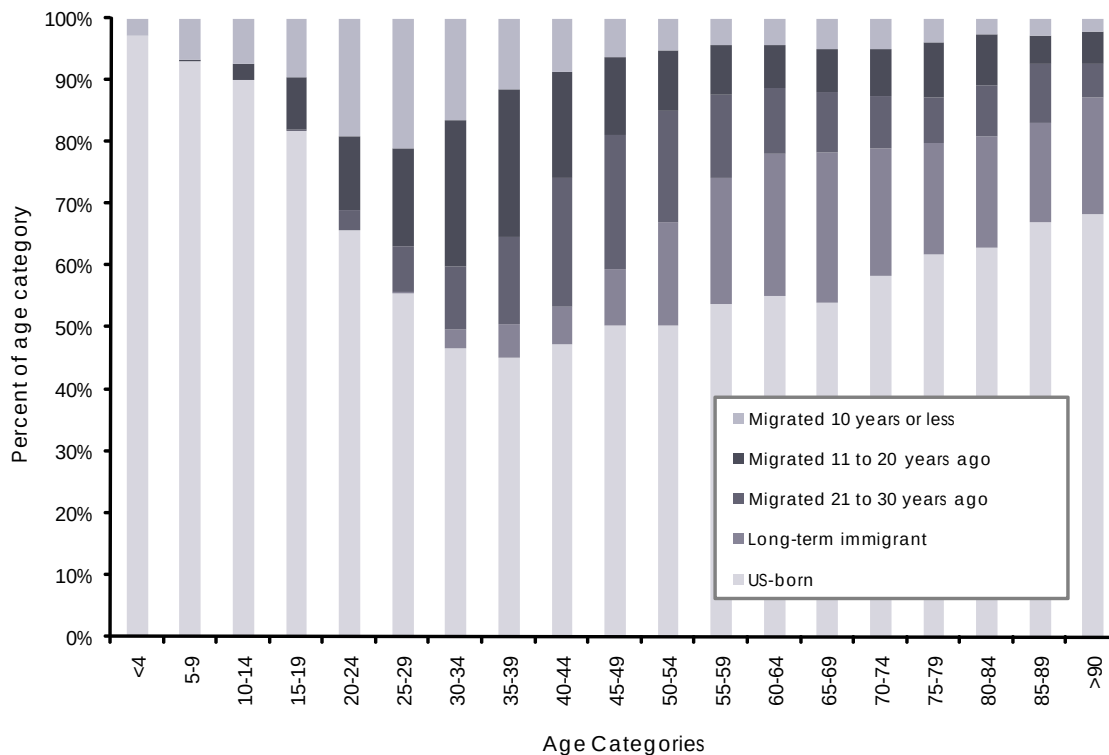
Business leaders recognize and the data supports that immigrants come to Los

Figure 3. Foreign-born Population that Migrated Within the Last 10 Years or Less in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of the 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

Figure 4. Age and Migration in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

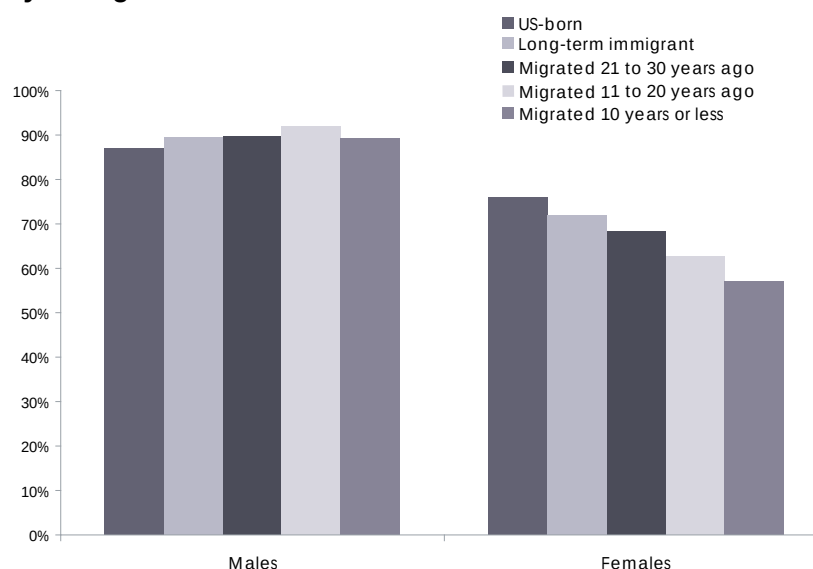
Angeles County to find employment. Figure 4 shows a large proportion of the working age population is foreign-born. In fact, between the ages of 30 and 44 across all categories, more than half of the population of Los Angeles County is foreign-born; between 45 and 54, it is exactly half. In the younger working age categories (between the ages of 20 and 29), natives dominate but this is also where we find the highest concentration of the most recent migrants. In any case, immigrants are a significant segment of the general population of Los Angeles

that is working, living, and spending throughout the region. Their contribution to the local economy is vital, especially in terms of their labor; without them, jobs would go begging. This is a major reason why business has stepped up its advocacy efforts.

Immigrant Work and Income in Los Angeles County

Nearly 46 percent of the Los Angeles County workforce is foreign-born, partly reflecting the highest concentration in

Figure 5. Labor Force Participation Rates in Los Angeles County by Immigration and Gender.



Source: PERE analysis of the 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

the working age categories. However, it is not just age but engagement. Labor force participation rates, meaning the percent of individuals who have either secured employment or are actively looking for work, also varies by immigration and gender. Figure 5 shows that U.S.-born males tend to attach to the labor force less strongly than immigrant males, and that such attachment to labor market participation generally increases with the recency of migration. To the contrary, immigrant females have lower rates and these fall with recency, perhaps reflecting increasing family responsibility. Combining age with race and ethnicity, Latino immigrant males between the ages of 25 and 54 have a 92 percent rate of labor force participation. White and

Asian U.S.-born males on the one hand and African American males on the other all have lower labor force participation, 90 percent and 76 percent, respectively.

Female immigrants exhibit lower rates of labor force participation than do their U.S.-born counterparts. However, such labor force participation rates rise with time in the country which is striking because there is also a higher likelihood that female immigrants will have children. Compared with the same group of immigrant women, around 60 percent of U.S.-born women have their own children living with them, while the figure for longer-term immigrants as well as those who migrated 11 to 20 years ago and 21 to 30 years ago, hovers around 80 percent.

The rate of having children does fall to around 70 percent for the most recent migrants, likely reflecting the fact that they have not yet formed families. Still, this is more than 10 percentage points higher than the rate for U.S.-born females of a similar age.

For these most recent female migrants, there may also be a tendency to understate labor force participation as they may be in the informal economy. According to a study by the Economic Roundtable on LA County's informal economy labor force, immigrant women are more commonly employed as informal workers.³ Non-citizen immigrant women are the most likely to work in private households, beauty salons, department stores and employment service industries, where earnings range from \$5,451 to \$10,692. Non-citizen immigrant men working in the informal economy tend to concentrate in landscaping services, automotive repair and maintenance, construction and truck transportation jobs, with earnings from \$10,031 to \$23,189. Across all industries, men earn more than women. Many sectors pay men nearly twice as much as female counterparts. The study estimates that on a typical day in 2004, there were

³ Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, and Pascale Joassart, *Hopeful Workers, Marginal Jobs: LA's Off-the-Books Labor Force*, (Los Angeles: Economic Roundtable, 2005).

How Immigrants Affect California Employment and Wages

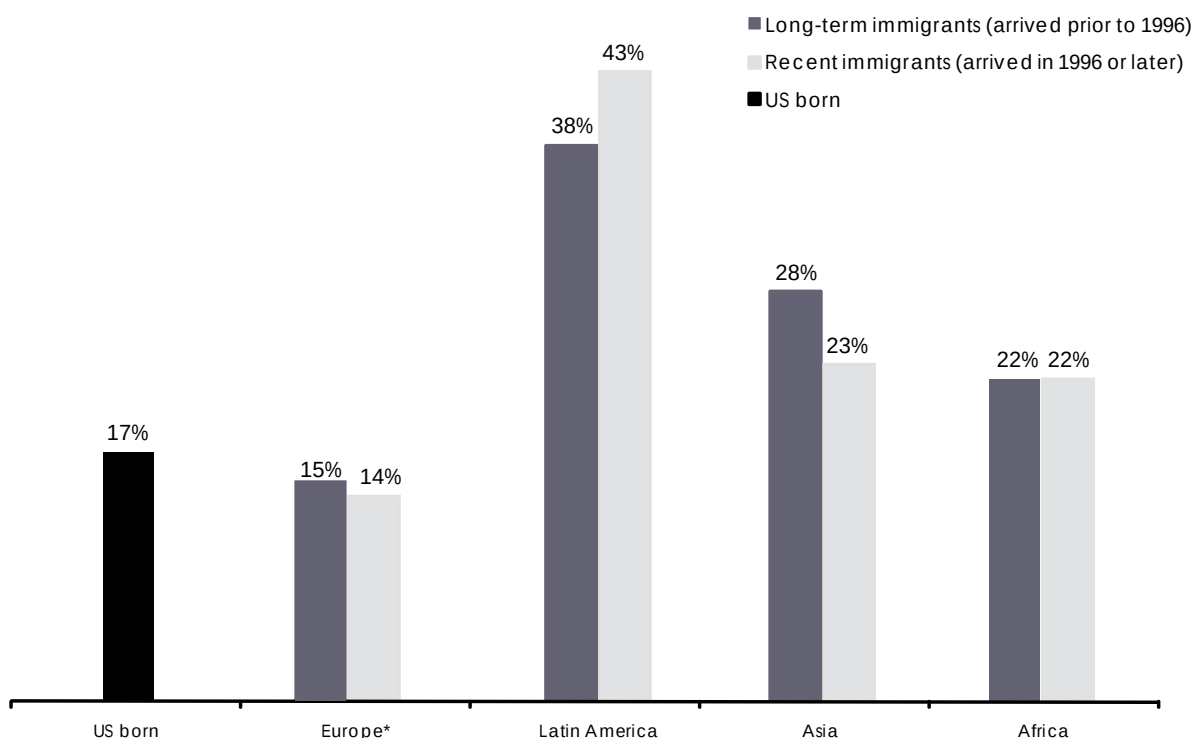
In the February 2007 edition of the Public Policy Institute of California's (PPIC) California Counts publication, Giovanni Peri conducted an analysis of how immigrants impacted employment and wages in California between 1960 and 2004.

Three of the report's key findings include:

1. Immigrants did not adversely impact employment opportunities for their U.S.-born counterparts with similar levels of educational attainment and work experience. Peri's regression analysis of the relationship between the net employment inflows of immigrants and U.S.-born did not find a significant correlation between immigration and the displacement of U.S.-born workers in California.
2. During 1990-2004, immigration increased wages for the average U.S.-born worker by four percent. This positive increase is attributable to the complementary nature of the different occupations performed by the two groups. Since immigrants arrive with different skills and education levels, they are less likely to be in direct competition with U.S.-born workers.
3. Recent immigrants negatively impacted wages for previous immigrants. This may be due to the fact that the types of jobs recent immigrants will most likely compete for are those that have previously been performed by other immigrant workers. Peri estimates that between 1990 and 2004, wages of immigrant workers were 17 to 20 percent lower (approximately a 1.4 percent loss per year) than they would have been had it not been for the arrival of new immigrant workers.

Source: Giovanni Peri, "How Immigrants Affect California Employment and Wages," *California Counts: Population Trends and Profiles*, vol. 8, no. 3, (February 2007).

Figure 6. Percent of College-Educated Workers in Unskilled Occupations in California.



* Refers to persons from Europe, Canada and Oceania.

Source: Migration Policy Institute.

approximately 679,000 informal workers in LA County. This sizeable workforce highlights unique challenges in designing workforce development and immigrant integration strategies; if one really wishes to take advancement seriously, one must devise an approach that includes support and advancement opportunities for those in the unregulated sectors.⁴

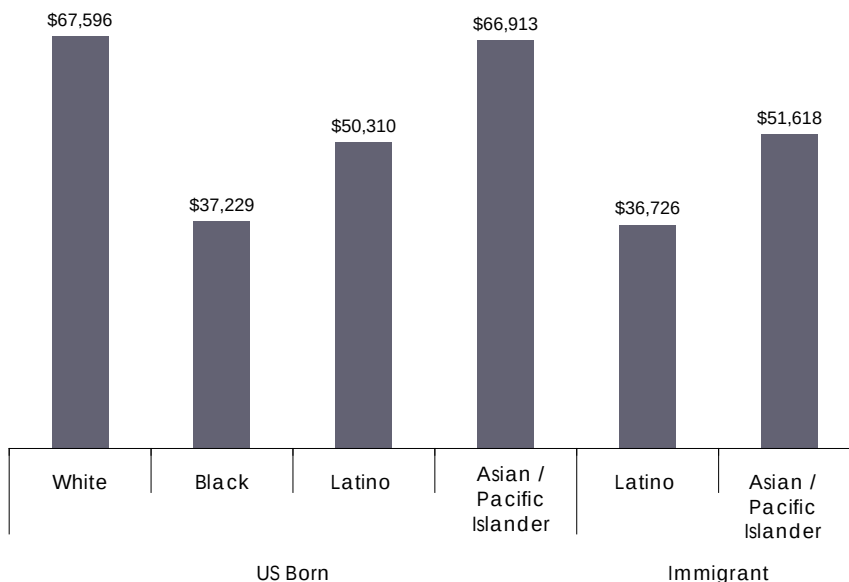
Despite the high degree of labor market attachment described above, low educational attainment results in low economic outcomes for immigrants.

⁴ Ibid.

Forty percent of the immigrant workforce lacks a high school degree and one-third are Limited English Proficient.⁵ The occupational groups with the highest percentages of foreign-born workers are Production (76%), Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance (75%), Construction Trades (63%), Transportation and Material Moving (55%), Food Preparation and Service

⁵ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 26).

Figure 7. Median Household Income in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

(55%), and Personal Care and Service (53%).

This concentration in low-paying occupations results from the lower skills of many recent immigrants but it also reflects employers' unwillingness to accept credentials and experience from abroad. For example, in California, 43 percent of recent Latin American immigrants and 23 percent of Asian immigrants who are college-educated are working in unskilled occupations (see Figure 6).⁶

Lower levels of education, issues with credentialing, and placement in

low-wage sectors results in lower levels of household income. Figure 7 shows the patterns of median household income in Los Angeles County by race, ethnicity and immigration. U.S.-born whites and Asians have the highest (and nearly equivalent) household incomes; U.S.-born Latinos and immigrant Asians have the next highest (and also nearly equivalent) levels of household income; and African American and Latino immigrant households find themselves at a nearly identical position at the bottom. This income pattern suggests three things. First, something could and should be done to translate immigrant assets, like high labor force attachment and international credentials to better economic outcomes.

⁶ Ibid, 25.

Part of the problem is a skills gap issue as even many minimum wage, entry-level jobs require a higher skill level such as computer literacy in a time where immigrants continue to be less likely to have access to a computer than those who are native born.⁷ It will be essential for the health of our economy and the region in general, that this skills gap gets closed and that programs are in place that can effectively prepare these populations for the skills needed in the workplace. Second, the data explains one of the bases for tension between African Americans and Latinos. Blacks are persistently last-place in both labor force participation and income, and sometimes see themselves in competition with new immigrants. While the evidence is scant that such competition can explain the stagnation in African American incomes, it is our view that a successful integration strategy must include a renewed commitment to Black economic and social progress.⁸

⁷ See Robert W. Fairlie, Rebecca A. London, Rachel Rosner, and Manuel Pastor, *Crossing the Divide: Immigrant Youth and Digital Disparity in California*, (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community, September, 2006) <http://www.cjtc.ucsc.edu/docs/digital.pdf>.

⁸ For a review of the evidence, see "Immigrants, Skills and Wages: Measuring the Economic Gains from Immigration," *IPC IN FOCUS*, Vol. 5, Issue 3, (Washington, DC: the American Immigration Law Foundation's Immigration Policy Center, March 2006). For a more pessimistic perspective on the effects on Black economic outcomes, see Steven

English and Immigrant Integration in Los Angeles County

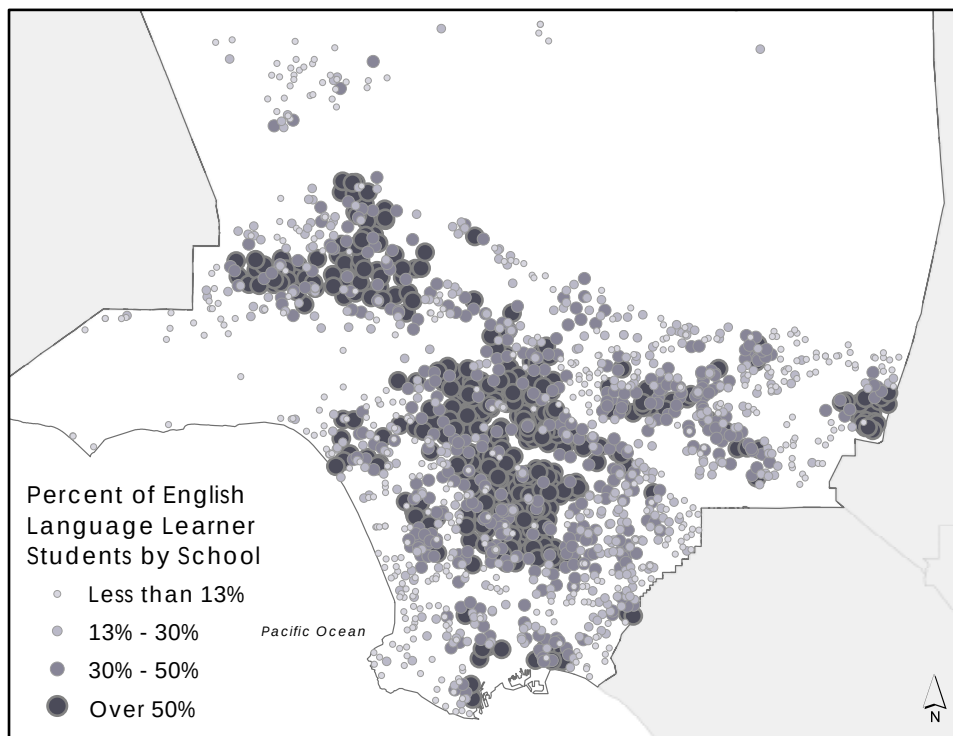
Of the many reasons for low incomes, limited English speaking capacity of immigrants may be the most easily addressed. Controlling for ethnicity, work experience, immigration status, and proximity to employment, research on Los Angeles has shown that the ability to speak English can raise wages by fifteen to twenty percent.⁹ Unfortunately, in Los Angeles, nearly 50 percent of workers in the top two occupational groups, Production and Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance are not English proficient. English training would be useful because it would eliminate wage penalties, help family well-being and meet the expressed needs of employers. Further, it would promote civic engagement and help reduce some social tensions caused by language differences.

Programs and policies that are created to address English language needs should acknowledge the diversity of language in the immigrant population in Los Angeles County. The Census uses a term called

Shulman and Robert Smith, *Immigration and African Americans*, in "African Americans in the American Economy," edited by Cecilia Conrad, John Whitehead, Patrick Mason, and James Stewart. (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

⁹ See Manuel Pastor and Enrico Marcelli, "Men N'The Hood: Spatial, Skill, and Social Mismatch for Male Workers in Los Angeles," *Urban Geography*, vol. 21, no. 6, (2000).

Map 3. K-12 English Language Learners in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of the Census Files Tiger/Line Files and California Department of Education.

“linguistically isolated households” to describe families in which no one above the age of 14 speaks English “very well.” Contrary to popular belief, linguistically isolated households are only about two-thirds exclusively Spanish-speaking and the rest are a mix of mainly Chinese, Korean, and Armenian languages. Geographically, linguistically isolated households are distributed as such: Spanish-speaking throughout the region, Chinese-speaking dominating in

San Gabriel and Diamond Bar; Korean-speaking in Koreatown and Cerritos; and Armenian-speaking in the Burbank and Glendale area.

Children of immigrants are also challenged by limited English abilities. Map 3 shows schools in Los Angeles County, with breaks drawn to indicate the school-level percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs). The larger and darker the circle, the higher the percentage of ELLs at a particular school. The map suggests that English

learners are ubiquitous throughout the County and are not only limited to the traditional areas of high immigrant concentrations that were described earlier. The majority of ELL students are actually native-born. In fact, in California, 79 percent of ELLs in Kindergarten through 5th grade are native-born, in contrast to 21 percent foreign-born (and of those foreign-born children, 47 percent have recently arrived to the State).¹⁰

Living in the Shadows in Los Angeles County

Most students are children of immigrants living in households with family members of mixed status: undocumented, legal resident or naturalized citizen. To estimate the numbers of mixed status households in Los Angeles, we utilized a technique originally developed by Enrico Marcelli of San Diego State University and David Heer of USC. The method relies on state-of-the-art random surveys that are personally administered by co-ethnics in order to collect information on which variables are most highly associated with being an unauthorized immigrant. These are transformed into an estimating equation (provided by Dr. Marcelli)¹¹ which is then applied to the

ACS. Because of the constraints of their method, we are only able to guess at the number of undocumented Latin American adult immigrants. We want to stress that this does not exhaust the population of the unauthorized. According to an Urban Institute report prepared for the Rosenberg Foundation, only 59 percent of the unauthorized immigrants in Los Angeles County were Mexican-origin.¹² Our own estimates suggest that another 20 percent are from other Latin American countries and the remainder are from the rest of the world.

In any case, it turns out that 16 percent of children (under the age of 18) are living in households in which either the householder or his/her spouse is an undocumented immigrant from Latin America. Of these children, fully 80 percent are themselves U.S.-born and thus U.S. citizens. Assuming that

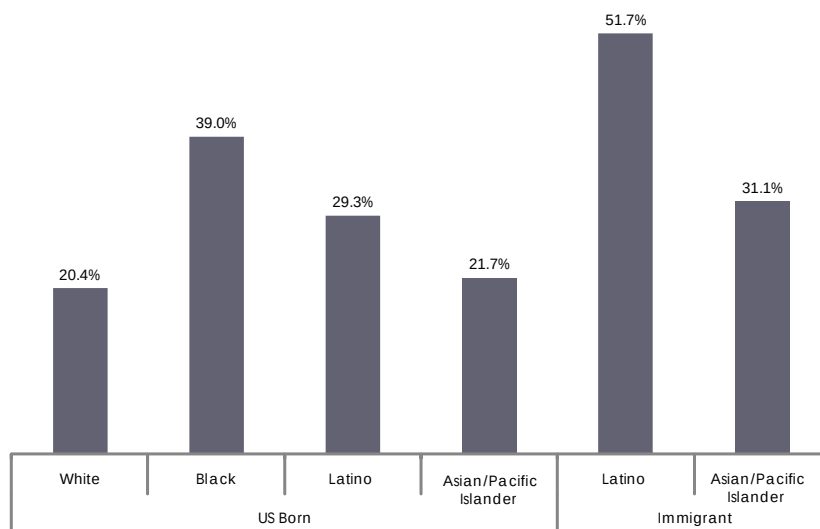
approach, see Enrico Marcelli and B. Lindsay Lowell, "Transnational Twist: Pecuniary Remittances and Socioeconomic Integration among Authorized and Unauthorized Mexican Immigrants in Los Angeles County," *International Migration Review*, 39(1): 69-102, (2005).

¹² See Karina Fortuny, Randy Capps, and Jeffrey S. Passel, *The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2007). We also checked our estimating process against Fortuny, et al. and found that we had nearly identical estimates for the number of undocumented Mexican-born adults (after adjusting, as they do, for the likely Census undercount).

¹⁰ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007).

¹¹ For a recent description of the estimating

Figure 8: Lack of Health Insurance by Ethnicity for Households in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of the 2003 - 2007 Current Population Survey.

similar patterns characterize non-Latin American immigrants but perhaps not as much, a conservative estimate suggests that fully 15 percent of Los Angeles children are living with at least one parent who is facing issues regarding their immigration status in the country.¹³

Immigrants and the Health Care Challenge

One of the basic issues facing any family in the United States is access to health care, and a primary barrier is the lack

of health insurance. As can be seen in Figure 8, this is an issue that confronts many groups, but is particularly acute in immigrant Latino, immigrant Asian, and African American communities. Over half of immigrant Latino households do not have health insurance.

The lack of insurance contributes to a lack of regular access to preventative medicine. In Los Angeles, those who are undocumented or work in the informal labor market have relied on county medical facilities to provide urgent or emergency care. To mitigate emergency room flooding, the County funds preventative care through a network of public-private partnership (PPP) community clinics. The

¹³ In addition, over 20 percent of Los Angeles children are living with at least one undocumented resident sharing their household.

restructuring effort began in the mid-1990s, in the face of a looming \$655 million budget deficit crisis. From 1995-2005, the county received Federal funds to help restructure and stabilize its public health system. This funding came from a Medicaid demonstration waiver that prioritized primary and outpatient care.¹⁴ When the program ended in 2005, there was some uncertainty about the future of the partnership, but a collaboration between clinics, community organizations, and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, ensured that the PPP program has continued thus far.

Such PPP clinics are crucial because they serve patients who are not covered by private insurance or government programs, and whose income is below 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.¹⁵ This turns out to be a substantial population. In 2004, such clinics cared for about 1.3 million people at over 100

different sites throughout L.A. County.¹⁶ In that same year, 66 percent of patients at PPP facilities were Latino and the assumption is that a high proportion of these individuals were immigrant.¹⁷ In short, PPPs are an important part of the immigrant health care system.

Yet there are challenges to the sustainability of community clinics, including the rising number of care-seekers and the corresponding growth in the amount of uncompensated care.¹⁸ This is in the context of higher need, partly because of the changing health care landscape of Los Angeles. By some figures the number of uninsured patients has doubled since 1995.¹⁹ Starting in 2004, the very public closures of trauma and emergency services at King Drew Medical Center (more recently known as King-Harbor) led to the eventual closure of the full-service hospital due to a handful of major patient care failures.²⁰ This closure combined with

¹⁴ See “Los Angeles County 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver Project,” <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidStWaivProgDemoPGI/MWDL/itemdetail.asp?filterType=dual,%20data&filterValue=California&filterByDID=2&sortByDID=2&sortOrder=ascending&itemID=CMS028174&intNumPerPage=10/>. Since this project has ended, many of the county and statewide webpages are being updated and specific URLs may change.

¹⁵ “Strength in Numbers: 2005 Annual Report” Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County, www.ccalac.org.

¹⁶ Tom Garthwaite “A Success Story for LA Healthcare,” *Los Angeles Business Journal*, (July 18, 2005).

¹⁷ “Strength in Numbers: 2005 Annual Report” Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County, www.ccalac.org.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tom Garthwaite “A Success Story for LA Healthcare,” *Los Angeles Business Journal*, (July 18, 2005).

²⁰ Jack Leanord “King Harbor Inspection Report Released” *Los Angeles Times*, (August 14, 2007), <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-king14aug14,1,3849288.story>.

recent reports of deficiencies at both the Olive View-UCLA Medical Center in Sylmar and the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center due to overcrowding,²¹ shows how low-income residents are consistently losing quality care. In other words, although the PPP program has been successful at providing preventative care to many, the increasing population of the uninsured, combined with the reduction of services in low-income communities jeopardizes immigrant health and consequently family well-being and long-term economic progress.

Immigrants Progress Over Time

Immigrant misconceptions abound especially regarding immigrant contributions to the economy and immigrant progress over time. For example, despite the fact that many recent immigrants are crowded into relatively low productivity economic sectors, we estimate that immigrants contribute over 40 percent of our region's total economic product.²²

²¹ Ron Gong Lin II, "Harbor-UCLA emergency room patients are in jeopardy, state inspectors say," *Los Angeles Times*, (February 6, 2008).

²² The immigrant contribution to our region's total economic product was estimated using the Bureau of Economic Analysis' 2005 GDP data for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana Metro area and our pooled 2005-2006 American Community Survey data set. Using the ACS, we first calculated the total number of workers in each industry for Los

Reflecting the tendency to see lower rewards for their effort, the immigrant share of total income is less but we estimate that immigrant spending power represents nearly 36 percent of the region's total.²³

Because immigrants make up nearly half of the workforce in Los Angeles, they are integral to the maintenance and growth of local business enterprises and the economy. If they were to disappear, our economic outputs would be crippled. In fact, recent examples of such an impact can be seen in Postville, Iowa where the nation's largest supplier of Kosher Beef, Agriprocessors, was raided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and 50 percent of the workforce was detained.²⁴ The implications were enormous as instantly 10 percent of the community and their contribution to the local economy was

Angeles and Orange Counties combined. We then computed the product per worker by industry, and multiplied that value by the number of immigrant and U.S.-born workers in each industry for Los Angeles County. As a result, we were able to estimate the share of the County's total economic product that is attributable to immigrant workers.

²³ Immigrant spending power was derived from the 2005-2006 ACS. We approximate that LA County's aggregate household income is \$2.24 billion, \$79.8 million of which is traceable to immigrant households.

²⁴ See Grant Shulte, Jennifer Jacobs, and Jared Strong, "Town of 2,273 Wonders: What Happens to Us Now?" *Des Moines Register*, (May 14, 2008).

Table 1. Home Ownership in Los Angeles County.

Percent Home Ownership by Group		Percent Home Owners by Immigration and Race		Non-immigrant	Long-term immigrant	Migrated 20-30 years ago	Migrated 10-20 years ago	Migrated last 10 years or less
US Born	54.2%	Non-Hispanic White		61.5%	72.0%	56.4%	40.5%	21.1%
Long-term immigrant	63.4%	Latino		47.6%	57.6%	43.5%	24.6%	8.4%
Migrated 20-30 years ago	49.7%	Asian/Pacific Islander		57.6%	72.7%	59.4%	43.9%	20.9%
Migrated 10-20 years ago	31.7%							
Migrated last 10 years	14.8%							

Source: PERE analysis of the 2005-2006 American Community Survey.

demolished. Similarly in Cactus, Texas, a Swift and Company meat-packing company was raided and nearly 1,300 workers were detained.²⁵ Landlords were faced with empty rental units with no potential replacements and storekeepers have suffered from an immediate decrease in customers.

While it may appear that the impact was strong only because these cases were in small towns where a high portion of the workforce was removed, the effects may be more diffuse than we think. In fact, it is large enough to worry Jack Kyser from the L.A. County Economic Development Corporation, Gary Toeppen, President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who all came together this past May Day to denounce the recent ICE raids in Los Angeles, emphasizing that tens of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue could be lost if continued raids force businesses to flee the state.²⁶

²⁵ See Sylvia Moreno, "Immigration Raid Leaves Texas Town a Skeleton," *Washington Post*, (February 9, 2007).

²⁶ Teresa Watanabe, Anna Gorman, Ari B.

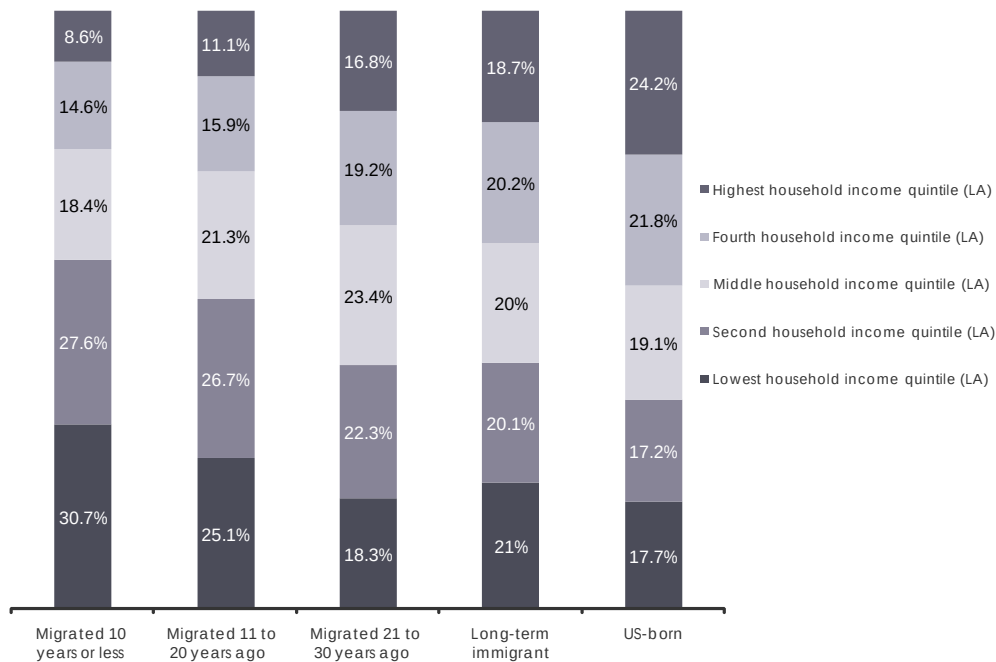
While the incomes of the foreign-born population tend to be lower than their native-born counterparts, their sheer numbers translates to a buying power that is a major contributor to our economic health. This is true because they still need to buy food, other staple items, consumer goods and services in general. In the aggregate, they are akin to the "emerging markets" of developing countries and have become the focal points for serious, significant financial investments.

Perhaps most important is that immigrants are making economic progress over time. That this is often not recognized in the popular discussion stems from what Dowell Myers calls the "Peter Pan fallacy"²⁷ – having experienced a recent wave of immigration, the general population often imagines that all immigrants are young workers who never age. In fact, many immigrants establish roots in the area and play an integral role

Bloomekatz, "May Day March Smaller, But Festive," *Los Angeles Times*, (May 2, 2008).

²⁷ See Dowell Myers, *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Compact for the Future of America*. (New York: Russell Sage Press, 2007).

Figure 9. Income and Recency of Migration in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE analysis of the 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

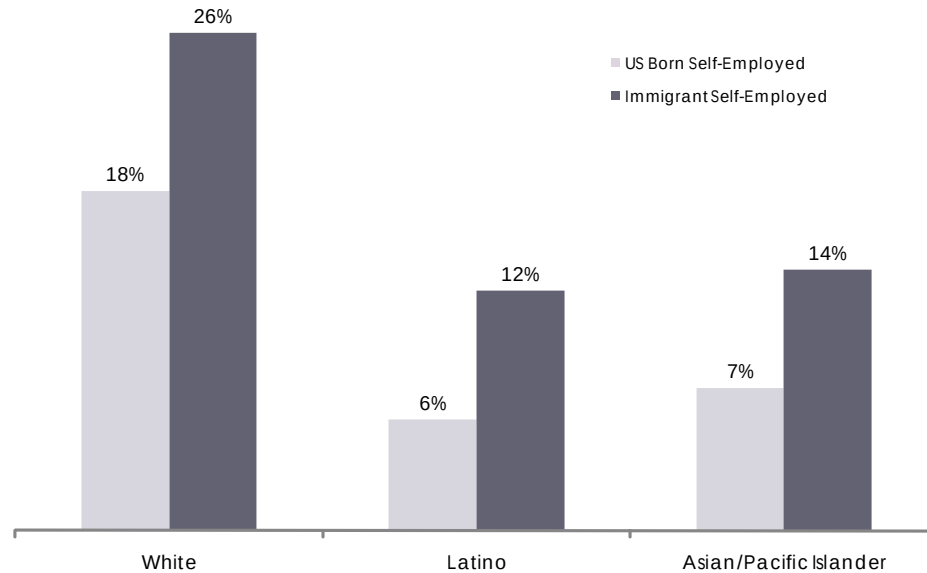
in shaping the regional economy and society.

One clear marker of this progression is home ownership. Home ownership rates among immigrants increase the longer they remain in the country, even surpassing the rate of home ownership among U.S.-born residents. For example, 63 percent of foreign-born residents who migrated over 30 years ago own their own home. Only 55 percent of U.S.-born residents are home owners. While there are variations by race, the lowest rates are among Latino immigrants who nonetheless over the long-term have homeownership rates very close to those of U.S.-born whites (see Table 1).

Foreign-born residents' incomes tend to increase the longer they remain in the area. Of those who migrated within the last 10 years or less, almost 31 percent are in the lowest household income quintile, meaning their household income was below \$20,526 in 2005. However, Figure 9 shows that nearly 40 percent of long-term foreign-born households earn incomes in the fourth and fifth highest income quintiles as opposed to 23 percent of recent immigrants.²⁸ Thus, while the U.S.-born still do better, immigrant income increases over time.

²⁸ This was derived by our analysis of the 2006 ACS data.

Figure 10. Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Los Angeles County.



Source: PERE Analysis of 2005 - 2006 American Community Survey.

Looking at Figure 10, we see that immigrants are more likely to be entrepreneurs than native-born residents. Within both Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander populations, there are twice as many self-employed immigrants as there are native-born populations. Six percent of native-born Latinos are self-employed as compared to 12 percent foreign-born Latinos and similarly, 7 percent of native-born Asian/Pacific Islanders are self-employed compared to 14 percent foreign-born. This presence of immigrant entrepreneurs represents an opportunity for business growth.

Progress is not simply on the economic front. Although Los Angeles County has

approximately one million unauthorized immigrants – over twice the number of any other US metro area – there has been an increase in naturalization rates. The share of the citizenry that is naturalized has increased from 9 to 16 percent between 1990 and 2005.²⁹ We will probably see an even higher percentage of increase since 2005, given the big push to naturalize that happened prior to a significant increase in naturalization fees in mid-2007.

²⁹ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 18).

Future Prospects for Immigrants in Los Angeles County

With all this good news, why worry? Because the past 20 years may not be reflective of the next 20 years. First, the number of immigrants has increased. The foreign-born were about 23 percent of the population in 1980 but have grown to 37 percent of the population. This increase has led to occupational crowding, competition and overwhelmed or disintegrating integration institutions.

Second, the economy has shifted. The reward for less-skilled work has been on the decline, health care remains inaccessible for many, and neighborhood concentrations of poverty has risen which affects job prospects, the environmental determinants of health disparities, and access to high-quality education. The days of struggling through with limited English but high hopes for your children's proficiency and future may be over. Unless parents are able to lift themselves out of working poverty, secure health insurance, and see local schools improve, the next generation will have limited options.

Finally, our current civic atmosphere does not seem to support immigrants.

While Los Angeles remains, in large part, a welcoming and open region, the state and national debate has been marked by rising concerns about the negative effects of immigration. That has ranged from generally unfounded fears that immigrants are swamping social welfare systems to worries that past patterns of assimilation will be impossible to reproduce in light of the increased numbers. Whatever the source or validity of these fears, the sentiments suggest social services that aided immigrants in the past may be cut off.

However, one can see from the data above, immigrants play an important, vital role in our society and they are here to stay and therefore need to be incorporated into policy decisions in the region. Thus, successful immigrant integration will require scaling-up to meet the enormity of the challenge: improving economic, educational, and civic supports to sustain pathways to success, and shifting the regional and national dialogue to renew our commitment to immigrant success. These themes emerged in our focus groups and we turn to them now.

Learnings from the Community

“We want to produce a societal overhaul.”

– Immigrant Rights Focus Group Participant

The data above offered a nuanced and useful picture of foreign-born residents in Los Angeles County. But data can only tell part of the story, revealing only what we can measure (or try to measure). Data lacks community knowledge that helps us understand what the numbers mean in terms of daily lives and policy challenges.

To enrich our understanding of what issues need to be considered – and to seek to capture elusive concepts such as leadership, messaging, and organizing – we asked for the opinions and ideas of diverse groups of stakeholders. In doing this, we reached out to both the usual and not-so-usual suspects, including both those accustomed to dealing with immigrants and those for whom this was a relatively new issue area. We conducted a series of individual interviews but our main data collection mechanism was a series of focus groups with representatives from six sectors, including:

- A group of **immigrant rights and refugee-serving organizations** who convened on November 6, 2007 at the California Community Foundation. Twenty-three people attended, representing immigrant communities from Central America,

Mexico, Russia, Korea, South Asia, as well as immigrant rights groups, legal advocates, service providers, and policy-focused organizations.

- A group of **business and workforce development leaders** convened on November 13, 2007 at the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, who co-hosted the event. Initially we were hoping to attract at least seven people, but in the end we doubled that with 15 attendees. Participants came from banks, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, education, and the food and toy industries.
- A group of fifteen **planning leaders and members of local governmental agencies** convened on December 11, 2007 at the California Community Foundation. Participants came from the cities of Glendale, Los Angeles, Pomona, Pacoima, and Riverside and represented agencies such as Planning Departments, the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, Children’s Planning Council, Los Angeles Mayor’s Office, and planning related non-profit organizations.
- A group of **funders** convened on January 16, 2008 at the California Community Foundation, which was co-hosted by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees. Eighteen funders from

throughout Southern and Northern California as well as Seattle, Washington were in attendance.

- A group of **labor and community leaders** convened on January 17, 2008 at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center, who also co-hosted the event. Twenty people attended representing organizers of day laborers and garment workers, immigrant workers associations, legal services, labor policy organizations, ethnic labor alliances, and faith-based leaders.
- A group of **seven interethnic community builders** convened on February 12, 2008 at the California Community Foundation. Participants came from community organizations throughout Los Angeles, including Little Tokyo, Chinatown, East Los Angeles, and South Los Angeles.

Each meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation to contextualize the foreign-born population in Los Angeles County. The presentation generally included some of the data offered above but also included a number of other dimensions of immigrant integration, including more specific information on language use, occupational breakdown, income, English language needs, and commuting patterns. The conversation started with participants giving their

reactions to the presentation in terms of what they found striking and what they thought was missing.

In general, participants found the information very useful and wanted more. We were able to incorporate some of their suggestions in subsequent data development and presentations, but others were not possible within the timeframe and scope of this work. Some of the suggested additions that we were unable to address that could comprise a research program and/or make for a more effective popular education curriculum include:

Economic Research

- A more detailed estimate of economic contributions of immigrants to the general regional economy.
- A better breakdown of economic participation in the formal and informal economy.
- Participation in banking and remittances.
- Analysis of what may happen to immigrant employment as industrial restructuring continues.
- Impact of home foreclosures on immigrants.

Demographic Research

- More detailed out-migration trends to Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (to mirror the patterns we show for Los Angeles County).
- Numbers and trends for undocumented students.
- More gender analysis, including family composition, analysis of the prospects of single-headed households, and divides in health insurance, civic involvement and English language ability by gender.
- Aggregation of data to the city level for specific policy purposes.
- Comparative success rates of students in school based on the jobs, education, and income of parents.
- Voter registration across generations of immigrants and educational attainment.

Historic and Forecasting Research

- A projection of immigrant political power in the future based on past trends.
- A historical timeline of immigration trends and political/social receptivity.
- Specific instances of historical displacement in industries dominated by immigrants.
- Future-casting of immigrants and how growth economies such as China will impact immigrant communities here.

Other Research

- Data on non-profits, non-profit density, and social service delivery systems, both those currently serving immigrants and those that might be in the future.

Participants were then asked to consider a series of questions meant to highlight current practices with regard to immigrant integration and to suggest new practices that should be pursued and specific investment recommendations. While the conversations were rich and complex, there was surprising consensus on general themes to include in a comprehensive initiative:

- Reframing the debate on immigrant integration via a new communication strategy,
- Developing new forms of collaboration and relationship-building between groups,
- Investing in leadership development for both immigrants and non-immigrant allies,
- Supporting advocacy to change the nature of public policy,
- Providing research to help with both new frames and policy design,
- Encouraging multi-generational education to improve economic and social outcomes,
- Investing in workforce development to improve the economic

opportunities for low-skill and low-wage immigrants, and

- Encouraging community education and organizing to ensure that the importance of immigrant integration permeates throughout all communities.

Embedded throughout these specific themes was a focus on enhancing civic participation, building new alliances, and stressing mutual gain across sectors and communities. There was also a sense of a need to act simultaneously in all the areas and a desire that foundations be willing to make long-term investments.

We discuss the top 10 themes below, and then synthesize them into a more tractable set of three strategy areas in a subsequent section on recommendations.

The top 10 go well beyond what funders would wish to do – or really should do. Interestingly, while focus group participants were asked to point to the potential directions of philanthropic investments, they took the opportunity to list multiple areas, multiple responsibilities, and multiple actors. This speaks to the relative gap in the public debate: when presented with an opportunity to address a full immigrant integration agenda, participants jumped at the chance. And this, in turn, does suggest an important role for

foundations that we stress below: as convenors for a new civic discussion about how to craft our common future.

1. Reframing the Debate

Unfortunately, in the current political environment, immigrants are often portrayed unfavorably and thus the issue of immigration has a negative connotation. The looming talk of recession will only exacerbate the anti-immigrant sentiment. This environment makes developing solid and effective solutions difficult. However, stakeholders that we spoke with have challenged us to remember that this country was built on immigrants who have positively contributed over the last 300 years. With this in mind, reframing the debate came up repeatedly. Framing guides the tone of any debate. George Lakoff argues that the recent immigration debate focuses on the problem of immigration rather than looking deeper into the root issues driving people to migrate. Thus the tone is negative from the start.³⁰

The media's unflattering spin on the immigration debate exacerbates immigrant experiences in the region. Immigrants are often portrayed as

³⁰ See George Lakoff, et al. *The Framing of Immigration*, (Rockridge Institute, May 25, 2006). <http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org/research/rockridge/immigration>.

though they only take from the good of society without offering any benefits in exchange. The general public rarely realizes the rich contributions of immigrants to Los Angeles. The way the debate has been laid out leaves little room for discussing the benefits immigrants

A Pioneer in Funding Immigrant Integration

The Colorado Trust in 2000 put together an ambitious 11-year funding project for Immigrant Integration. Working with 19 different grantees, the Trust developed a comprehensive framework that supported immigrant communities, their advocates, and the members of the community in which they reside with a strong focus on building collaborations. The evaluation of the initiative identified four important facilitating conditions to strong collaborations:

1. Engagement and retention of a stable group of leaders,
2. Strong leadership capacity of coordinators and/or directors,
3. Credible lead agencies, and
4. Facilitation of support and training.

Finally, many of the collaborations expressed the importance of involvement from city and county government, law enforcement, diverse faith groups and local governments.

Source: Association for the Study and Development of Community, *Evaluation of the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative Immigrant Integration Strategy for the Colorado Trust*, (2007).

bring. A new message needs to be developed so that communities throughout the County can see the true contributions immigrants make to the region. This requires a set of positive representations to show the many dimensions of the diverse foreign-born population of Los Angeles.

One such message, which was touched on above, is being developed and offered by the work of USC Professor Dowell Myers. In his book, *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Compact for the Future of America*, he stresses the demographic challenges facing the United States as the massive Baby Boomer generation retires and needs a working population that can support the social security, health care and other institutions critical to aging populations.³¹ He argues that immigrants are critical to this but that the intergenerational compact will only work if the society invests in immigrant families and children. While this is not as complete a picture as many would like – other fundamental issues include the American value of openness to immigrants and immigrant organizations – it is an important part of reframing the debate in terms of positive contributions, mutual gains, and mutual obligations. From business leader to labor activists to community activists, all stressed the need

³¹ See Dowell Myers, *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Compact for the Future of America*. (New York: Russell Sage Press, 2007).

for a new “frame” as a key starting point for any other activity.

2. Collaboration and Relationship Building

The need for collaboration and relationship building as a way to build trust was a point of consensus among the focus groups. Only through trust will we be able to bring together the extremely diverse foreign and U.S.-born populations to forge sustained change. The process may be complex because it is necessary to cross many sectors and barriers to create interethnic cooperation and collaboration. Links need to connect business with community groups, immigrant groups with other immigrant groups, city to county governmental agencies, governmental agencies to communities, non-immigrant to immigrant, and all the various combinations in between.

Collaboration not only brings people together but it exposes groups to different perspectives, allowing for more creative and comprehensive approaches. In addition, it helps different sectors reach out to populations with whom they are not as familiar. This is why stakeholders across all meetings called for space to continue dialogues and build



May Day March, May 2006.

Photo by Patrick Miller.

alliances between and across groups. It is particularly important to develop unlikely pairings. For example, several participants reported the importance of including local police departments that have a uniquely nuanced understanding of immigrant populations.³² Given the changing demographics in Los Angeles, where possible it is also important to

³² Policy and Planning Group Participant, December 11, 2007.

build on existing deep collaborations between immigrant and African American populations (for example, the work of the Community Coalition in South L.A.).³³

3. Leadership Development

Participating in coalitions presumes capacity (and better if it is equal) on the part of coalition partners. This is not always the case for leaders and organizations in newer immigrant communities, and so leadership development was another theme repeated by focus group participants. Leadership development refers to activities that engage immigrants to take action on their own behalf. It also implies that some of the larger anchor organizations within Los Angeles need to work with the smaller organizations within their communities to help build-up their organizing capacities. Leadership development must translate into community leadership with a focus on bringing together the diverse communities to address immigrants, their contributions to our region, and how to create shared action agendas within and across communities.

³³ For more on the Community Coalition and its interracial efforts, see Rene P. Ciria-Cruz, "Beyond Just Getting Along," Third of Six-Part Series: To Live And Let Live In South L.A., New America Media, News Feature, Posted: Sep 13, 2006. http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=a2acc1f04797d282f8fe144f050a38b8.

Leadership development programs are important as skill-building mechanisms, networking opportunities and relationship building to strengthen people and organizations. Implicit within these programs is an opportunity for practical collaborations and real time experiences to provide a positive impact on the participants. Lessons from the Leadership Development in Interethnic Relations (LIDR) program led by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) have shown the importance of including the following aspects in strong leadership development programs that emphasize collaboration skills: cultural awareness training, including personal, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and the role of stereotypes; skills building that includes conflict resolution, team building, and violence prevention; and a team-based community practical training with community leaders.³⁴

4. Policy and Advocacy

Many participants acknowledged that in order to advance and institutionalize immigrant integration, there needs to be policy and advocacy efforts. Advocacy refers to a broad range of activities that can influence policy, policymaking, and policymakers. This can range from

³⁴ See Angela Glover Blackwell, Stewart Kwoh, and Manuel Pastor, *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America*, (New York: Norton & Co., 2002).

research to organizing to educating voters and can be bolstered by building alliances, working in collaboration with other organizations, and strengthening the staff capacity of organizations to conduct advocacy work.³⁵

Although policy and advocacy efforts can be addressed more broadly, there were three main arenas that were discussed throughout the six focus groups in relation to policy and advocacy: community organizations, one-stop offices at different jurisdictional levels, and coordination amongst officials.

First, community organizations need to build their capacities to advocate for local policy change. This includes developing or contributing to local policies that benefit immigrant communities and helping to introduce and/or involve immigrants into the civic life of Los Angeles. However, to get to that level, organizations will need capacity building, advocacy agendas, media exposure, base mobilization, and relationship building with targets of the advocacy efforts, such as legislatures or city council members. Advocacy efforts could be directed to put pressure on existing governmental programs that are not currently implemented to their fullest extent. For example, the

³⁵ Alliance for Justice, *Build Your Advocacy Grantmaking*, (2005).

MPI report points to aspects of the No Child Left Behind policy that are not being enforced, such as leveraging its requirement of parental involvement for parents of English language learners.³⁶

Second, an office at a local level needs to be instituted that serves as a one-stop center to provide resources to all immigrants trying to navigate civic life in Los Angeles. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, which was initiated during the mayoralty of James Hahn but has stalled over the past few years, has similar goals and has recently been reinvigorated by Mayor Antonio Villagraigosa's Office and the City Human Relations Commission.³⁷ Promisingly, they have created an Advisory Board that includes 33 non-profit organizations to provide guidance and help determine the issues to be addressed. The New York Office of Immigrant Affairs offers a good example of city and county governments coming together to provide comprehensive assistance to immigrants.³⁸ Santa Clara County offers a similar program

³⁶ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 42).

³⁷ Patricia Villasenor, Deputy Director of the Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission, interview on June 6, 2008.

³⁸ Policy and Planning Group Participant, December 11, 2007.

that not only provides assistance to recent immigrants, but also promotes positive immigrant relations with and between native populations. They provide culturally competent information on the largest foreign-born populations in their region. Los Angeles County could develop its own approach but make good use of these previous efforts.

Third, elected and other government officials need to coordinate their own policy agenda in terms of immigrant integration, partly to be more successful at lobbying for resources from state and federal governments. Of course, to do this, they will need to develop their knowledge of organizations working on immigrant issues in their local areas; even when officials are willing to engage local immigrants, studies have shown they do not necessarily know who to contact.³⁹ They will also need to overcome the usual fragmentation in services and jurisdictions, an issue highlighted by many focus group participants. This is hard work, but critical to having a truly regional approach to what is clearly both a regional challenge and a regional opportunity: integrating immigrants and insuring that their success benefits the broader society.

³⁹ Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick, and Paul G. Lewis, *Immigrants and Local Governance: The View from City Hall*, (San Francisco, California, Public Policy Institute of California, 2005).

5. The Need for Research

Research needs to inform any of the actions that might be taken. It can frame the debate, providing the data and information that community organizations can use to organize and educate immigrants and non-immigrants. Research can also provide the platform to test drive innovative ideas, as well as to catalog the best practices throughout the country. The complexities of immigration and immigrant integration requires research to fully grasp the nature and contribution of immigrant communities on a societal, economic, and cultural level.

Potential research opportunities suggested throughout the focus groups were:

- Community surveys to list needs and assets,
- Deeper study of the obstacles to integration,
- Use of data to develop capacity building to change barriers to integrate,
- Broad surveys of how immigrants are perceived so as to develop a new frame that can minimize xenophobia and hostility,
- Documentation of anti-immigrant hate crime incidents at County schools and communities, and
- Economic impacts of Earned Income Tax Credit and related tax programs in high-immigrant communities.

In general, there was simply a desire to have a research capacity that could “tell the story” of immigrants in Southern California; focus group participants were struck by the data collected as a way to jump-start this effort and were convinced that getting this sort of information into the general public could go a long way to building a new understanding and a new consensus of the importance of immigrant integration.

6. Adult English Language Acquisition

The need for adult English language acquisition far exceeds the supply and funding throughout the County. The MPI report estimates that about 1.6 million legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants would need English language instruction to pass the naturalization exam, or to even participate civically within the region. However, during the 2002-2003 school year (which was the most recent data available), only about 272,000 people were enrolled in English classes at adult schools and community colleges, the largest outlet for free English classes.⁴⁰ The gap is gigantic and there appears

⁴⁰ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 38).



Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa at the Immigrant Integration and the American Future: Lessons From and For California Conference, USC, April 2008.

Photo by Patrick Miller.

to be a decrease in enrollment for these programs – which may be attributed to a lack of awareness within the immigrant population of these services, inaccessibility to classes, lack of transportation and child care, and slow

student progress and discouragement to continue through the program. Another issue for approximately 10 percent of this population is the lack of basic literacy in their own native languages. This presents unique barriers to learning a second or third language in some cases, especially to those whose native languages are indigenous.

In addition to the limited supply of free English classes offered throughout the County, there are issues of access, convenience and quality. Most classes, as stated above, tend to be completely impacted or are not offered at convenient times or places. One solution is to bring English language programs on-site to the workplace; there are many manufacturers and distributors that are open to this idea because they know the importance of bringing the workforce up to their capacity. However some business leaders have stumbled upon restrictions that make this very difficult to implement on the worksite.⁴¹ The Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Rancho Santiago Community College District has begun to address this issue by launching a program called “English Works.” The goal of this program is to address workforce competency and employability by teaching English to 50,000 workers in Santa Ana by 2010. They offer free classes at over

70 locations throughout the city, some of which provide child care services to participants. For those workers who are unable to attend onsite classes they have even made a home learning kit available through a program called Sed de Saber which teaches English using LeapPad technology.⁴²

Improving English not only positions immigrants to be able to take and pass the citizenship test for naturalization, it increases their ability to participate within society, to assist their children with homework, and importantly, to pursue economic mobility and promotion opportunities. The old debate about whether immigrants should or want to learn English is tired: they do want to learn and they need to be afforded the tools to do so.

7. School Age Learners

Schools are key for integration in several ways. First, schools generally serve an integrating role for all students, as the place where basic societal norms are taught. Second, English Language Learner (ELL) programs allow families to participate regardless of immigration status and this enhances civic engagement. Finally, education is key to long-term economic advancement.

⁴¹ Business Group Participant, November 13, 2007.

⁴² Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce website, <http://immigration.server263.com/index.php?content=f20060313>.

Of course, education overall can be compromised if children cannot understand what the teacher is saying. The ELL population in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is larger than in any other district in the United States. Interestingly, 80 percent of the ELLs in primary school in Los Angeles County are native-born, a reflection of home language preferences and skills on the part of parents that should be addressed through the expansion of ESL programs recommended above. However, MPI has found that once these children learn English and graduate out of the ELL category, they tend to do better academically than their non-ELL counterparts.⁴³ The challenge is making sure that they move on to English in a timely fashion.

Of course, English is not enough: students need to also graduate from high school and be positioned for post-secondary education or gainful employment. There is a general problem with educational attainment in Los Angeles County and immigrant parents can (and should) be an important part of any broad educational reform. Increasing parent participation within the school system provides

an important point of entry to civic participation as a whole; further, parent involvement can help improve a child's educational outcomes while at the same time improving the quality of the school itself. Thus, the specific recommendations in this broad arena of education reform involve supporting research into highly effective ELL strategies and creative dual-immersion English/Spanish programs and encouraging parent participation.

8. Workforce Development

Further workforce development needs include training opportunities, skill development, and recognizing foreign credentials. Employers that rely on the local labor force may be more apt to participate in programs that develop the skill base of their workers. But it is important to tap into the business community to partner on potential initiatives. Many workforce development issues revolve around benefiting and uplifting the undertrained and undereducated workers so that they may advance within their career and thereby improve their economic standing.

One avenue to address workforce development is expanded union apprenticeship programs, combined with direct outreach to immigrant communities for their participation. However, these opportunities tend to be limited to those immigrants that are

⁴³ Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 49).

legal residents or naturalized; after all, if unauthorized immigrants graduate from such programs, their immigration status might make finding work difficult. This suggests the need to continue to support paths to legalization, but it also underscores the need to have other programs, such as community-based adult learning centers, that are easily accessible to all immigrant residents.⁴⁴

In addition to undertraining, employers may not recognize international training and credentials. As mentioned earlier, there are a significant number of foreign-born workers currently employed in low-skill occupations who have professional degrees from their native countries. The roadblocks that limit foreign credentials are determined by professional associations rather than based on local, state, or federal policies.⁴⁵ These professional associations must decide what type of training from which countries is valid for comparable work in the United States. The discretionary nature of the

process leaves a window for excluding people based on protectionist tendencies, rather than based on the quality of specific educational training.

9. Community Education and Organizing

Something that resonated throughout most focus group meetings was the need to educate and organize communities throughout Los Angeles. This educational process needs to be structured to fit into people's lives, and organizing is the best model to reach people where they are.

Specifically, community organizations need to be trained in teaching immigrants how to pass the citizenship tests and how to engage civically. Foreign-born populations with resident status or those who have been recently naturalized have unique educational needs. Foreign-born residents who have not yet taken the step towards citizenship, need to understand naturalization benefits, the services offered to pass the exam, and how to become civically engaged. In addition, once foreign-born residents become citizens, the educational focus moves towards informing them on electoral work and voter participation.

Participants, however, did not think that community organizing should be limited to immigrants themselves. Rather, participants called for two-way educational experiences where diverse non-immigrant communities and diverse

⁴⁴ See Chris Benner, Tony LoPresti, Martha Matsuoka, Manuel Pastor, and Rachel Rosner, *Immigrant Workers Empowerment and Community Building: A Review of Issues and Strategies for Increasing Workforce and Economic Opportunity for Immigrant Workers* (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community, April 2005); available at: http://www.cjtc.ucsc.edu/pub_reports.html.

⁴⁵ Margie McHugh, Presentation at the California Immigrant Rights Conference, *Moving Forward: Building a Shared Vision for California's Immigrant Communities in 2008*, (California Immigrant Policy Center, October 30, 2007).

immigrant populations in Los Angeles learn from and about each other. This is especially important in order to debunk the myths propagated through the media, and to enhance dialogues between groups like African Americans and immigrants. All Angelenos need cultural competency training and education to build lasting intercommunity bridges. Further, the education needs to address culturally diverse methods of learning. The best way to ensure its appropriateness is by partnering with community organizations already doing this work throughout the county; these include labor-based efforts, faith-based efforts, and others.

Particularly important in this bridge-building is the patience required for the one-on-one dialogues that are the heart of community organizing. The New Sanctuary Movement offers a model, one that works through churches and other faith institutions to create new conversations about immigrant rights, immigrant communities, and the ways in which this fits with social and religious values of generosity and welcomeness.⁴⁶ Another model is the Strengthening Our Lives (SOL) effort that is focused on immigrant working

families but includes non-immigrants as well. Based in Fresno, Orange County, and parts of Los Angeles, SOL encourages people to share their stories of why they came to California and through this, build a common understanding.

There are many other such conversational strategies, including those deployed by One LA-IAF, an Alinsky-style group operating throughout the County. All contribute to sustained interactions rooted in basic values that can create the base for mutual efforts better than thin coalitions focused on particular interests or issues.⁴⁷ This may seem like a series of “soft” activities with outcomes that are difficult to measure and hard to track but participants viewed them as critical to reaching and incorporating all the diverse groups, communities, and sectors, and creating ways in which all Angelenos can fully contribute to and benefit from the area’s large immigrant populations.

10. Public Benefit Use and Access

Although the issue of public benefit use and access was not a major theme that arose from the focus group discussions, it is nonetheless an important theme to address, partly because it figured prominently in the MPI report that is one of the basic building blocks for this report.

⁴⁶ See <http://www.newsanctuarymovement.org/>. They offer literature for groups to use to build mutual understanding, including a congregational handbook, *For You Were Once A Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith*, that offers facts, stories, and techniques for conversation.

⁴⁷ See <http://www.sol-california.com/>.

Within the discourse on immigration, the issue of both access and use of public benefits comes up repeatedly, especially by those who claim that immigrants are a burden on the system.⁴⁸ A significant body of research suggests that immigrants are essentially a fiscal wash when one takes account of all levels of tax contribution and spending.⁴⁹ The problem is that many of the economic benefits of immigrant labor and income taxes accrue at the national level while costs, such as public assistance, school expansion, and other matters, are highly local. But these costs are less a result of immigration *per se* than they are a function of larger family size and lower incomes.

For example, MPI suggests that while immigrants are disproportionately poor, they often use disproportionately less public benefits compared to other groups in the same income bracket. In fact, many immigrants, nearly 50 percent of whom are uninsured, rely on safety-net clinics for free or reduced care or avoid care altogether.⁵⁰ In fact, encouraging

immigrants to access resources to which they are entitled could help with unresolved health problems and through this, boost labor productivity and regional income.

Health may be an especially important arena for advocacy. Through civic participation, community leadership development, and policy development, systemic changes in the healthcare system can provide better access to all. In addition, these issues further provide opportunity for cross-community organizing and can serve as a unifying issue to bring groups together, especially since the data above shows that the greatest numbers of uninsured are immigrant Latinos, African Americans, and immigrant Asians. Advocating for access to quality care is an important occasion for immigrant and non-immigrant communities to come together.

One strategy often used in Latino communities to address these issues is the support of promotoras, or community health workers. Promotora programs usually work at the grassroots level with members of the community who work within their community to educate people on health issues. In addition to educating the community, these programs serve as leadership development tools

⁴⁸ Public benefits include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income, and Medi-Cal.

⁴⁹ See Gordon H. Hanson, *Why Does Immigration Divide America?: Public Finance and Political Opposition to Open Borders*, Working Paper 129, (Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, December 2005).

⁵⁰ Leighton, Ku, "Why Immigrants Lack Adequate Access to Health Care and Health Insurance," *Migration Information Source*, (September 2006), <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=417>.

[migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=417](http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=417).

to lift up the skills of the promotoras themselves, as advocacy tools to educate communities on the issues they are facing, organizing tools to bring the community together, and collaboration and relationship building tools as the promotoras reach out to new people within the community.

To get to this as a strategy will require a broad reframing of the debate about public benefit use and access. The current “narrative” suggests (somewhat

incorrectly or at least without nuance) that immigrants are burdensome to the system. This is both at odds with the facts and with another possible strategy: invest now to reduce costs down the road. For example, better strategies for workforce development and credential recognition can support the upward mobility of immigrants into jobs that may provide benefits and financial support sufficient to sustain their families.

Recommendations for Strategic Directions

In considering strategic directions to impact immigrant integration one needs to consider three fundamental values of American society: opportunity, democracy, and openness.

In our view, Americans value opportunity and mobility more than they do equality. They feel that every American should be given the chance to succeed to their fullest and to lift themselves up beyond their predecessors – and once given that chance, outcomes that reflect differences in talent and drive are easily tolerated. They also place a high value on democracy and civic engagement, insisting the country should be run by and for the people – and that those who are here must therefore take it upon themselves to be involved in national and local conversations about our shared future.

Finally, Americans value their history as a welcoming country that enables freedoms denied in other countries and is always open to fresh ideas – and they expect that new residents will share those values and be actively building bridges to other communities as well.

The Migration Policy Institute

In their paper, *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the Migration Policy Institute looks in depth at issues around immigrants and poverty, labor and workforce, health care and public benefit access, and youth and adult English language education. Following are their suggestions at possible directions for investing in immigrant integration:

Potential Directions:

- An express integration policy led by the Mayor's Office, philanthropy, business and non-profits to promote language access, civic engagement, and language acquisition.
- A leadership development strategy for both immigrant community leaders and civil servants.
- Community planning grants.
- Investments in organizations that promote naturalization, registration, and voting to focus on providing language and civics instruction.
- Initiatives that promote year-round engagement; i.e. parent involvement programs, investment in health care.

Source: Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Migration Policy Institute, December 2007).

These three values – opportunity, democracy, and openness – translate directly to our definition of immigrant integration: improved economic mobility for, enhanced civic participation by, and receiving society openness to immigrants. We organize our recommendations into those three areas below, suggesting a range of strategies that might be of special interest to foundations.

Because service provision is important for immigrant communities, we assume that foundations will and should fund and support model service delivery programs. However the collective feedback from focus groups, research, interviews, and the MPI report, as well as our own analysis, suggests that an additional role for funders includes a broader set of civic tasks, including convening community and business leaders across sectors to make a commitment to immigrant integration, assisting the provision of information that can make the debate more informed and more civil, and working with others (including grantees and agencies) to move supportive policy so that model programs can become standard practice.

A final admonition: It is important to remember, however, that the diverse immigrant population in Los Angeles (and many other regions) comes from all over the world, and correspondingly from many distinct realities that need

to be addressed. We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach, and assume that all programs will be applicable to all immigrants. Serious consideration needs to be given to designing programs and initiatives with strategies as diverse as the immigrant populations they seek to serve.

Goal 1. Increase opportunities for economic mobility for immigrants, their families and their communities.

Socio-economic mobility is a cherished aspiration of American society. As discussed earlier, our research shows that immigrants are a major part of the workforce in Los Angeles, but they also tend to be in low-skill and low-wage occupations with limited opportunities to move up the economic ladder. Increasing opportunities for the economic mobility of immigrants, their families and their communities can help improve the economy for Los Angeles overall.

Some of the barriers preventing immigrant economic mobility include: limited-to-no knowledge of English, lack of transferable education credentials, insufficient social connections to high paying occupations (partly because of residence in areas of concentrated poverty), and in some cases, a lack of documentation.

To address these issues, strategies should focus on improving economic opportunities for immigrants in the workforce, but also for their families and neighbors. In particular, African American communities who have historically faced many barriers to economic mobility need to be incorporated into the strategy.

Tackling Literacy

A sometimes overlooked obstacle to learning English is illiteracy in one's own native tongue. One community organization, Centro Latino for Literacy (Centro) addresses adult English language acquisition by providing free Spanish literacy classes for immigrant populations in the Pico Union area of Los Angeles (although participants have come as far as Monrovia and Compton to attend classes). Using a computer based program they designed called Leamos, the Centro teaches non-literate Spanish speakers to read and write in Spanish so that they may function better within society. After 100 hours of instruction, most participants can read at a fourth grade level. Once participants are comfortable with reading and writing in Spanish, they can progress through the advanced classes offered at the Centro, such as English, financial and health literacy, and computer classes. On-site ESL classes are offered in collaboration with LAUSD and therefore the Centro is used as a satellite for Belmont Adult School.

Source: Centro Latino for Literacy, (January 2008).

Objective 1: Support the economic advancement of immigrants in the workforce through English language acquisition, workforce and business development, and the recognition of the educational credentials of foreign-trained workers.

The major obstacles facing immigrant workers' employment advancement opportunities are language barriers, limited skills training, lack of legal papers, and barriers by employers and professional associations to recognize foreign-based training.

Potential Strategies

- Partner with community colleges, businesses and labor to provide integrated worksite English and skills training classes with well qualified instructors.
- Partner with professional associations and city and state agencies to identify licensing and accreditation procedures for professional degrees obtained outside of the country.
- Analyze career ladders, with special attention to upward mobility and attachment to growing industries, such as the green economy, health care, and logistics, and build this into immigrant workforce development.

Objective 2: Increase opportunities for families and children of immigrants by working to improve K-12 education and by specifically promoting parental involvement in schools.

Education is not only the foundation to future economic opportunities, but it is an important avenue for immigrant integration as well. Education has been shown to improve a person's economic mobility as an adult. It is thus vital to expand the quality of K-12 education and access to postsecondary education for all. In addition, K-12 education is often the first place parents become acquainted with systems and institutions in the United States and where children learn the norms of the United States society.

There are many programs throughout Los Angeles already addressing these issues through parent leadership programs that would be useful to study and scale. Three notable programs are the Parent University, a collaborative program between SEIU Local 1877, UCLA's IDEA, the UCLA Labor Center and UCLA students; the Parent School Partnership program implemented by MALDEF; and the APALC's Parent Academy series. Some of the important aspects of these programs which are essential in considering like projects are:

1. Teaching parents how to work within the school system so they can ensure that their children are on the right path to advance through

school, the ELL Program and on to a college education, and, if not, how to advocate on their behalf,

2. Developing parent leadership skills to work on advocacy issues beyond just their child and extending to local schools, and
3. Engaging workers, unions, employers, and the families of workers to create opportunities at the workplace and through unions to increase workers' capacity to help advance their children's education.

Business Takes a Lead

The Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce recognized a need for a long-term strategy that dealt with training immigrants as the region faced population growth driven by immigrants accompanied by a decrease in the average per capita income. In addition, their research found a major technical skills gap between local workforce and local industries. One of their strategies to reverse this trend was to create a jointly administered public-private high school with funding from the Chamber working in tandem with the school district. The curriculum is called High School, Inc. and is designed to serve as a training school for the six growth sectors of the Santa Ana region; automotive and transportation, engineering and construction, global business, health care, manufacturing and new media. The goal of the school is to train students and to serve as a bridge between high school and the working world or college.

– Business Group Participant, November 13, 2007.

Potential Strategies

- Sustain successful parent leadership programs to enable them to continue this important work.
- Partner with principals, businesses and local chambers of commerce to develop innovative programs that target real world occupational preparation within middle and high school.
- Work on policies and programs to encourage preschools and elementary schools to offer dual immersion or dual language instruction.

Objective 3: Invest in traditional African American communities and organizations in increasingly immigrant communities so as to complete the economic and social integration of neglected native-born populations.

While the new interest in immigrant communities is welcome, we and others worry whether this could lead to a decline in investment in African American organizations and neighborhoods. We believe that such investments should be sustained and increased for two reasons. First, such organizations are often looking for help as they adjust to new immigrant constituencies in their service areas and they have often been the bedrock for many efforts aimed at community development and social justice in what are now increasingly immigrant communities. Second, a clear way to combat inter-ethnic tension, and deter people from holding immigrant

“Immigrant integration should not happen in isolation of anyone else... (otherwise) you will isolate the effort and exclude the involvement of other people.”

–Participant, Coalition Building

populations culpable for social stresses and woes, is to demonstrate commitment by investing in those communities as well. Many communities that have been historically African American are seeing larger influxes of immigrant populations. In order to benefit immigrant communities, we must increase the welfare of the community overall.

Potential Strategies

- Sustain community organizations in African American communities, especially in South Los Angeles, to help address community needs.
- Create community leadership development training, particularly for youth, to focus on building bridges between African American and Latino communities.
- Sustain concrete programs that meet the common interests of African Americans and immigrants, such as pre-apprenticeship programs for African American and Latino youth to connect them to labor apprenticeship programs.

Goal 2. Enhance opportunities for civic participation by immigrants.

Democracy is one of the great promises of this nation. Yet we have often fallen short of the ideal, prompting social movements, such as those that resulted in the civil rights protests of the 1960s, to call us to our higher purpose. It was a challenging era but eventually we acted nationally and locally to establish a legal framework that insured that all Americans could vote and voice their views.

As much as American democracy was threatened by the Jim Crow laws of the past, it is weakened today by the fact that so many of our region's residents have a limited voice in the decisions that affect their lives. In our view, immigrants need a space to express their opinions and participate in the civic life of Los Angeles. We see this as part of the democratic promise, but even those who may feel strongly about who should not take part in decision-making should recognize that providing avenues for immigrant participation can inculcate a spirit of engagement that will hopefully persist as many of these residents make the passage to being U.S. citizens.

Building Immigrant Leaders

An example of leadership development is the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund's (MALDEF) work around leadership building for hometown association (HTA) leaders. HTAs are social networks in host countries that bring together migrants from particular regions, towns or municipalities. Some of these organizations are informal groupings of individuals that come together to play soccer or other sports. Others are more formal networks that not only serve as a mechanism to help their hometowns improve social and economic projects, but also to help migrants navigate through the host country's systems, and integrate better into society. Many of the more formal groups began informally and through a natural progression set up or affiliated with broader federations or similar groups. In Los Angeles, there are many HTAs, the largest number coming from the Mexican state of Jalisco, with 103 clubs;¹ however, there are more than 400 clubs from many states throughout Mexico within Los Angeles,² and many more from other countries as well. There are even federations that represent all the clubs from one state and a broader organization that represents all the state federations of Mexico called the Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas (COFEM).

MALDEF's work in this area began in 2005 when leaders of the COFEM realized the need to develop their capacity level and train individuals wanting to establish their own HTA. The MALDEF-Hometown Association Leadership Program or LIDER is a 15-week curriculum that introduces people to MALDEF and the HTA system. Participants learn about the roles and responsibilities of HTAs in the community, legal rights, getting out the vote, immigration rights and much more. The program focuses on teaching participants how to involve themselves as members of the broader community.³

1 Luis Escala-Rabadan, et al., "Mexican Migrant Civic and Political Participation in the U.S.: The Case of Hometown Associations in Los Angeles and Chicago," *Norteamerica* 1, no. 2, (July-December 2006): 137.

2 Univision, "Que es el Consejo de Federaciones?", <http://www.univision.com>.

3 Interview with Sara Zapata-Mijares, (January 4, 2008).

There are ample opportunities for non-citizens to exercise civic participation, including getting involved in school meetings, community gatherings, community organizations, civic clubs, hometown associations, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood councils. Voting and direct service in most government and quasi-governmental agencies are the only two areas that non-citizens are barred from.

Although the opportunities do exist, here we highlight potential barriers to active civic participation for non-citizen immigrants in Los Angeles. Many immigrants come from countries where participation is not encouraged, at best. Immigrants in low-income jobs who supplement their wages with a second job or overtime have little time for civic engagement. Further, in public settings, real or perceived feelings of unwelcomeness to the undocumented incites fear of deportation and decreases participation. Finally, even some avenues for local participation, such as neighborhood councils, are perceived as hotbeds of anti-immigrant sentiments, even though they were founded on principles of full civic engagement.⁵¹

To address these issues, relationships and collaborations need to be built through leadership development, increased political participation, and bringing together groups across many sectors.

⁵¹ Policy and Planning Group Participant, December 11, 2007.

Objective 1: Build leadership skills through the use of proven models, experimentation with new models, and active learning from leadership training experiences in other regions.

Strong leaders are vital to ensuring that the issues of immigrants are being addressed. While there are many actual barriers to civic participation, one of the easiest to resolve is a lack of knowledge about how to work within the system. Building an understanding of current systems and developing programs to enhance leadership skills can allow for greater civic participation and common agenda setting between immigrant and non-immigrant communities. There are many types of leadership development programs from which to learn, including parent and community leader programs as described earlier and hometown association leaders as described in the text box on the previous page.

Potential Strategies

- Build the capacity of organizations to provide leadership skills to immigrants.
- Invest in leadership development of receiving communities to encourage a shift in attitudes and a new set of skills.
- Create opportunities for community leadership development training and practical real time collaboration.

Objective 2: Increase political participation through support of naturalization, as well as encouraging immigrant residents to participate in local planning processes and assisting city authorities in developing appropriate outreach.

Immigrants are affected by the policies implemented by local, state and federal governments; if they are to insure that their needs and issues are addressed within those frameworks, they will need to get involved. Part of this will involve promoting naturalization for the many long-time permanent residents who are here legally and are active participants in the economy, but have no voice in the political process. It is also necessary to inform and educate naturalized citizens to ensure that they understand the issues facing their communities.

A more difficult challenge is the participation of the estimated one million undocumented residents in Los Angeles County. As noted, nearly half these residents have been here for over a decade and the regional economy has become accustomed to their labor, even as they remain shut out of full economic and civic participation. In the absence of a federally designed path to legalization, we will maintain a two-tier society with all the attendant risks. We firmly believe that this is dangerous for society – and also believe that legalization will eventually be part of a comprehensive immigration reform in coming years. Preparing for that day will require creating avenues for

Media and Engagement

NALEO, SEIU, the We Are America Alliance with television and radio outlets and hundreds of community organizations nationwide initiated the “Ya es Hora” civic participation campaign (in English, “now is the time”) to focus comprehensively on naturalization, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote drives to incorporate Latinos into the political process. The successful efforts of this campaign led to over one million naturalization applications in 2007 alone.

– Ya Es Hora website, http://www.yaeshora.info/sobre_ya_es_hora.

participation and a voice for all residents of the County.

Some of the major barriers to this goal are the lack of accessible information on how to complete the application, limited or no English language skills and content knowledge to be able to take and pass the naturalization exam, and the financial burden of the application fees. The MPI report, for example, estimated that over 900,000 legal permanent residents within Los Angeles County would need English language instruction in order to pass the exam, and also pointed to nearly 700,000 undocumented immigrants who would need such language training.⁵²

⁵² Michael Fix, et al., *An Analytic Framework for Developing an Immigrant Integration Strategy for Los Angeles County*, The National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2007, 35).

Potential Strategies

- Invest in programs that help immigrants complete the naturalization process by providing both English and United States civic classes, guidance to fill out the application, and fee waivers or fee microloans for low-income applicants.
- Organize naturalized and underrepresented native-born populations to understand the issues facing their communities and get out to vote during elections.
- Invest in organizations working towards immigrant rights and comprehensive immigration reform on a federal level.

Objective 3: Support multi-ethnic, multi-sector, and multi-agency convening processes that can help immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as leaders from the diverse immigrant populations of Los Angeles, build a firm basis for collaboration and participation.

While we have stressed the importance of investing in immigrant leadership and organizations, immigrant integration is a two-way street – and building the sense of mutual responsibility and mutual destinies is crucial. This will only occur, however, if we focus on building multi-ethnic coalitions that can cross lines of race and space.

Multiracial coalitions in Los Angeles and the nation, in general, are beset by three specific challenges. One, Americans

are disengaged from issues of national and local importance. At least until this recent electoral cycle, voting rates were down and popular cynicism towards government was up. Coalitions are hard to form when people believe that little can be done. Second, it is extraordinarily difficult to talk about race given a highly polarized discourse in which some Americans believe civil rights have been achieved and we are now a colorblind society, others believe that an inherently uneven playing field is a feature of our history and still persists, and still others find themselves hesitant to talk for fear of saying the “wrong thing” and being labeled either racist or ethnocentric. This “failure to talk” has helped produce a third challenge for multi-ethnic coalitions: the country lacks a clear vision for racial justice. While the civil rights movement of the last century focused on ending legal discrimination, in our time we lack direction since current issues of inequality are deeply embedded in the economy and residential segregation, and we are not clear what can and should be done.⁵³

Despite the challenges, crossing the lines that divide is important. To get there requires a series of steps and undergirding principles. First, a positive vision must be created and sustained. Second, racial and ethnic issues must be given ample space from the start; otherwise they

⁵³ Angela Glover Blackwell; Stewart Kwoh, and Manuel Pastor. *Searching for the Uncommon Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America*, (New York: The American Assembly, 2002).

could arise later and may be destructive. Third, leaders need to focus on forming trusting relationships that enable tough conversations on race and be supportive when crises arise. Fourth, cross-sectoral coalitions must put an end to fragmentation and let members share their skills, to garner greater wins. Finally, there needs to be a mix of practice and analysis for coalitions to have vibrancy.

While we have focused here on race, an equally important set of divides occurs between sectors and agencies. One key sectoral divide is between business and labor. We are not naïve – workers want higher wages, firms want higher profits, and there are bound to be conflicts. But our own analysis and conversations indicate that there are shared concerns about the vitality of the immigrant workforce. Businesses may first come to immigrant labor based on lower cost but they have also developed a sense that these are highly attached and eager workers, and they are clearly open to training and other programs that raise skills (and, yes, even wages) in the pursuit of higher productivity.

Another set of divides is between agencies and branches of government. While we discuss fragmentation of government services below, suffice it to say that this is not an issue that affects only immigrants. Still, it is important and one way in which foundations can contribute is as convenors of coalitions

Unions and Employers Work Together

Building Skills Partnership (BSP) is a joint project between the security guard and janitor's union, SEIU Local 1877, and building owners and managers. The program is currently funded by monies coming from both labor and employers, as well as from a California Employment Training Panel (ETP) grant, which stipulates on-site training as a condition of funding. Although relatively young, the BSP serves almost 1000 low wage workers per year, and has already begun to make a difference in the lives of workers in varying capacities. BSP's program is holistic in scope: emphasizing both workplace development and development in the home. Their on-site English program allows workers to attend a one-hour class for three days a week, the first hour of their work shift. According to Aida Cardenas from the BSP, the demand for these courses is high, from both immigrant workers who are eager to improve their English skills, and from employers who see the program as a way to develop their workforce. In its pilot year, the on-site ESL course drew in 191 participants, compared to the 65 that attended the ESL course that was held at Local 1877. Upon completion of the six-month program the participants are given a \$100 bonus. The BSP is expanding into an independent non-profit, and is already fielding requests from building owners and employers to provide on-site training to employees in an expanded capacity.

Source: Interview with Aida Cardenas, January 2008.

to facilitate the collaboration of groups and agencies that would not normally come together.

Potential Strategies

- Convene a series of coalitions to address specific integration issues, such as: a city/county agency coalition, an immigrant/Black coalition, a multi-immigrant coalition, and an immigrant/native-born coalition.
- Convene a cross-sectoral working group around workforce development, helping to define common interests and strategies for economic advancement.
- Work with multiple city agencies to bridge gaps at reaching immigrant populations.

Goal 3. Foster openness in society towards immigrants and their families.

America prides itself on its openness to people and ideas – and Los Angeles is emblematic of that embrace. When the world came here for the Olympics in 1984, we were able to boast that the world was already here: immigrants from all the visiting countries were on hand to greet the teams from their former nations. And it is this sort of openness that will allow us to accommodate to change and build a framework that can make the most of what immigrants and their families can offer to our broader regional social and economic health.

While there are many reasons why we have become less open – economic insecurity, fear of cultural change, and the sheer scale of immigration to name just three – one big issue involves the challenges that occur when complex issues get reduced to sound bites and accusations. The way around this barrier and toward openness involves both changing attitudes and changing realities. The attitude shift for native-born populations, involves gaining knowledge and understanding of the immigrant situation and their true contributions to the region. But attitude is not enough.

We also need to address a fragmented governance structure that plagues Los Angeles and many other regions, a structure that leaves no clear delineation of whose role it is to address immigrant integration. It is also important to create the sort of person-to-person coalitional experiences that can go beyond a communications strategy and create a more solid basis for change. Our recommendations below are in this vein.

Objective 1. Support organizations that seek to reframe the debate and provide a balanced view of immigrant contributions to the local regional economy and society.

Public misconceptions create a barrier to integration. Misperceptions include the belief that immigrants are all Mexican, young and never aging, using up our public benefits, and overcrowding our schools with immigrant children unversed in English. The data presented here and

Integration by Executive Order

In November of 2005, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed the New Americans Executive Order designed to identify areas where the state can support efforts to enable immigrant social and economic integration. The Executive Order has been successful at identifying the current and historical contributions of immigrants and mobilizing a host of different interests – business, community, labor, faith, and government who are developing policy recommendations for a comprehensive immigrant integration strategy. In addition to this policy council, the Executive order has developed a New American Interagency Task Force aimed at increasing coordination and standardization amongst government agencies in providing foreign language services, staff cultural training, and data-driven programmatic and policy decisions affecting refugees and immigrants. This comprehensive response is poised to enable work around immigrant integration on multiple fronts simultaneously, notably with government support.

Source: Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, *For the Benefit of All: Strategic Recommendations to Enhance the State's Role in the Integration of Immigrants in Illinois*, (December 2006).

in the accompanying report from the Migration Policy Institute suggests this is wrong even in the case of immigrant-rich (and traditionally viewed as mainly Latino) Los Angeles. The foreign-born population is in fact very diverse and come from many different countries. Given income levels, they are using public benefits less than native-born populations and the great majority of English learners in our schools are native-born and making progress.

Moreover, the economy of Los Angeles is dependent on foreign-born workers and will benefit even more if this population is well-educated and well-trained in order to maintain its regional competitiveness. As the

large Baby Boomer population retires, immigrants will replace the shortfall in the workforce and continue to provide funding for social security.⁵⁴

Reframing the debate along these lines can help us focus in on the real issues: education, workforce development, and civic participation to promote immigrant advancement. And while there may be a common set of strategies, it will also be helpful to communicate the complexity of the foreign-born population lest leaders and decision-makers fall into a trap of relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.

⁵⁴ See Dowell Myers, *Immigrants and Boomers, Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

Learning from the Silicon Valley

The Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations' Immigrant Relations and Integration Services (IRIS) has moved beyond just a service model for immigrants and towards working actively on developing resources for immigrant communities to empower themselves. This includes highlighting the contributions that the diverse immigrant population brings to the area and promoting "positive immigrant relations and integration services."

Since integration is a two-way process, civic participation is facilitated by the County making efforts to promote civic engagement, citizenship courses, and community development, for both the results of that work and the effort it symbolizes to change the context of reception for immigrants. Further, their interactive and multilingual website (including an ESL class search engine) offers access to resources in an efficient, expedited manner.

Source: www.sccgov.org.

Potential Strategies

- Develop a media messaging campaign to address reframing the debate.
- Educate non-immigrants on the benefits and diversity of immigrants.
- Hold countywide study circles for mid-level leadership.

Objective 2. Help local governments understand that immigrant integration is a core responsibility and assist officials who are finding ways to work across often complicated jurisdictional lines.

Los Angeles seems to have perfected the fragmentation of governance: we have 88 cities in the county who infrequently coordinate, often jealously guarding their prerogatives and their tax revenues. Large swaths of the County are unincorporated, including East Los Angeles with its

sizable population and a city college very important to immigrant students (East LA City College). The County itself may be a logical location for immigrant integration responsibilities across the region but it does not wield significant power over anything but transit and health policy, with additional responsibilities for fire protection and policing in unincorporated areas and cities contracting for services. Educational systems offer yet another level of complexity, with LAUSD at odds with the main city it serves and the adult services that would be most relevant to immigrants poorly coordinated.

Immigration is not the only cross-cutting issue getting short shrift in the midst of this jurisdictional complexity but it is one of the most important to be left to one side. One of the most important things that foundations can do is help local governments understand that this is one of their core responsibilities – not because it is well-funded but because it is critical to regional survival. And to do this, local governments will need to coordinate better amongst themselves.

We realize that this is a tall order. Yet as Ramakrishnan and Lewis say, "effective governance depends on open channels between government officials and constituents."⁵⁵ For Los Angeles

⁵⁵ Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick, and Paul G. Lewis, *Immigrants and Local Governance: The View from City Hall*, (San Francisco, California:

County, we would expand that to include open channels within the various governmental sectors.

Potential Strategies

- Convene a coalition of cross agency, cross City, County and LAUSD to address the importance of local government's responsibility for immigrant integration.
- Reinvigorate a local Office of Immigrant Affairs to address the needs of immigrants to fully integrate into the civic life of Los Angeles, but also to help receiving communities understand these populations more fully.
- Push government to do the work of immigrant integration by funding community-based organizations that can prompt action through advocacy.

Objective 3. Support groups that organize around common issues that span all the diverse immigrant and non-immigrant populations and can help various communities see their mutual regional interests.

Building coalitions among government officials is important but it is equally critical to create person-to-person and community-to-community relationships

Public Policy Institute of California, 2005).

Faith Communities Coming Together

Traditional organizing models say that “anger casts out fear.” Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), a religious organizing group, say instead that “perfect love casts out fear.” Thus, to cast out fear through congregations, CLUE is bringing together Latino evangelical congregations with both white evangelical congregations in Orange County and black evangelical congregations in South Los Angeles under the common context of prayer and to explore pastoral responses to immigration.

These dialogues are catalyzed by a coalition of 1200 Latino Christian Evangelicals who call themselves La Red de Pastores and enables them to reach populations they do not normally work with but in a setting that they can relate to.

Source: Interview with Alexia Salvatierra, Executive Director of CLUE Los Angeles, February 2008.

that can sustain common bonds of understanding. We think that one way to do this is support those groups that organize across boundaries, and not just those groups working on immigration *per se*.

Some important components for a thriving coalition include: a clear context and mission so as to set the tone around the work of the coalition; developing clear deliverables for each participant; being open and honest about organizational capacities in terms of what one can or cannot bring to the coalition; and a clear

understanding of what each community can gain from the coalition. Some have also stressed the need to build such coalitions and learning experience amongst younger community members and faith institutions, setting a pattern of collaboration that can persist.

Potential Strategies

- Convene a quarterly meeting on immigrant integration to bring together unusual suspects, like business, non-profits, faith-based organizations, unions, philanthropy and civic leadership from both the City and County governments.
- Support person-to-person relationship building through community organizing and promotor-a-type programs so that people begin to build the trust that is so critical to sustain coalition work.
- Invest in helping immigrant organizations build the capacity to integrate into coalitions on common issues like housing affordability, workforce development and community safety.

The Niche for Foundations

While some of the recommendations above specifically target the philanthropic role, it is useful to stress that foundations can also play a useful role as convenors of leadership, providers of information, investors in new models, and movers of policy.

“It’s important that we connect a racial justice lens to immigrant integration work.”

-Participant, Coalition Building

Convening and Developing Leadership

Foundations can launch a series of efforts to convene leadership to work in the areas of the economy, civic engagement, and social reception. They could, for example, help create conversations about workforce needs that would bring business, unions, and workforce trainers together to review best practice strategies for up-skilling immigrant workers. It could, as noted above, bring agencies across cities together to understand why and how immigrant integration should be a core governmental responsibility. And it could convene a broad range of civic leadership on a quarterly or biannual basis to simply track the progress of immigrants and raise public consciousness on the issue.

It will also be necessary to develop the leadership to be convened. This involves investing in training programs in a wide variety of community-based organizations, supporting efforts to naturalize immigrants and encourage electoral participation, and working with city agencies to open public participation processes to non-citizen residents. But it also means bringing leaders together to understand their mutual interests – and funders are often in a unique position to

command the respect and attention of multiple strands of leadership.

Providing and Framing Information

Foundations have an important potential role in dispelling myths and educating the public about the facts of immigrant integration. Part of this involves the development of new research capacity, perhaps through a series of allied institutions that can focus on the facts of immigrant integration and also catalog emerging successful practices. But it also involves the creation of a new ability to create and disseminate messages about immigrant contributions, immigrant progress, and the interdependence of long-time and recent Angelenos.

This does not mean supporting a Pollyannaish view of immigration: there are real issues of displacement, cultural change, and competition that will require honest analysis and discussion. But by supporting the development of information, leadership, and dialogue, foundations can create the groundwork for what some have termed “the highest common ground” – an understanding of



Immigrant Integration and the American Future: Lessons From and For California Conference, USC, April 2008.

Photo by Patrick Miller.

mutual interests forged not by shallow agreement but by the hard work of conversation and compromise.

Investing in and Promoting Models

Foundations can also lead the way to best practices and programs by investing in model community-based literacy programs, stellar efforts to engage immigrant parents in their children’s education, and unique and unexpected coalitions amongst community organizations. This list can easily be expanded to other areas, including

health, workforce, and urban planning, but the point here is simply for funders to be conscious about investing in, then disseminating the lessons from innovative programs.

Such promotion is important because the efforts of smaller and more nimble foundations can sometimes point the way for other players in the foundation world who may have ample resources but have less of an ear to the ground. In our view, what happens in L.A. may not stay in L.A. – immigrant integration has become an issue of real concern to many philanthropies and as funders embark on this work, they will find it useful to pool knowledge as well as money in the quest to generate a more productive future for immigrants and the larger society.

Moving and Shaping Policy

Model programs will not be enough – policies must change as well. Foremost

among these is national immigration reform. For example, if we do not eventually craft an immigration policy that includes a path to citizenship, nearly 10 percent of the County population and an even larger share of its workers will be in permanent and dangerous limbo. Foundations help move a national agenda by investing in community organizations that are working on state and national policy, and by supporting the efforts of those who are protecting communities from the excesses of current policy.

Foundations should also support direct policy change at a local or metropolitan level. In particular, regional funders convene local government actors and help them identify obstacles standing in the way of effective service delivery to immigrant communities. This is not an easy task – the fragmentation that affects immigrant families affects many other realms of public policy – but it is nonetheless crucial.

Conclusion

America has long been celebrated as a nation of immigrants. While this is a bit misleading – we had a sizeable and eventually displaced indigenous population, not all who came to our shores were willing migrants, and some populations just happened to live on land that we annexed – it is a telling myth and it is rooted in the reality of so many who are now here and helped this country grow and prosper.

We often tend to think the America that resulted was just the happy consequence of a nearly automatic process of assimilation. But the truth is that the emergence of unions and the strength of business allowed many immigrants to move from the working class to the middle class, a strong investment in education at all levels allowed their children to climb their way into colleges and the professions, and a series of strategies, including social security and federal lending programs, allowed these families and their children to own homes and attain some degree of retirement benefits.

The last several years have seen heated debate about immigration, particularly at the national level. But these fiery conversations about border controls and the changing American culture seem to ring hollow when stacked against our local realities. Regardless of what does or does not happen in Washington, the future of our region

is now deeply connected to the fates of the large numbers of immigrants and their children who live here. And while the national focus has been on the costs of new immigrants, the leaders we interviewed in this research tended to believe that immigration has been a boon to Los Angeles County. It has provided new workers, residents who are revitalizing communities, and a new sense of energy and transnationalism in an increasingly global society.

Whether we are able to capitalize on the assets immigrants bring depends on what we in Los Angeles and elsewhere do to insure a reception that can provide a platform for improved economic mobility and enhanced civic participation. The challenges are large and the tensions are real. But we must start somewhere – and the development of a new frame for the debate, a focus on leadership development at all levels, and a reconfiguration of existing service delivery systems to better fit our new populations can be one such starting point.

Regional business, civic and community leaders can embrace this opportunity, understanding that improving economic mobility for immigrants, enhancing their civic participation, and facilitating a more open and positive native-born response to immigrants and their families will actually benefit us all. Of course, the real challenge is not simply

to describe change or even to point to the general directions in which a region and a nation must go; we also need to have the capacity to implement a new framework with grace, sensitivity, and effectiveness.

Immigrant integration is, after all, not a special program or a special interest. It is a common effort that can benefit us all even as it resonates with our deepest values of celebrating economic mobility,

encouraging democratic participation, and maintaining an openness to people and ideas. However, it will require leadership in an era when other institutions, including government, have lost their way. Funders can be an important part of that leadership, stirring other actors and institutions as together we find our way to a brighter and more inclusive future for all residents.

Appendix: Focus Group Participants

Immigrant and Community Organization Group

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Marvin Andrade, CARECEN

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Comprehensive Service Center

Aida Cardenas, SEIU 213

Samuel Chu, Immanuel
Presbyterian Church

Hamid Khan, South Asian Network

Linton Joaquin, National
Immigration Legal Center

Hector Aquiles Magana, CARECEN

Alma Morales, LA Voice - PICO

Sara Sadhwani, APALC

Angelica Salas, CHIRLA

Peter Schey, ARCA

Rhesma Shamasunder, California
Immigrant Policy Center

Lorraine Sharkey, Literacy Network

Melanie Stephens, Centro Latino
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Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Western
Justice Center

Liz Torres, Worksite Wellness Project

Carlos Vaquerano, SALEF

Steve Voss, IILA

Arturo Ybarra, WCLO

Grace Yoo, Korean American Coalition

Dae Joong Yoon, KRC

Business and Workforce Development Group

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Angelica Banuelos, Valley
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Horacio Bellofiore, California
Specialty Farms

David Crippens, DLC & Associates

Fernando Denecochea, Southern
California Edison

Paul Garza, Garza Consulting

Elizabeth Jimenez, LAUSD
Achieving A+ Summit

Michael Metzler, Santa Ana
Chamber of Commerce

Ali Modarres, Pat Brown Institute

Mark Pisano, SCAG

David Rattray, LA Area
Chamber of Commerce

Mari Riddle, Pacific Community
Ventures

Mark Roth, El Burrito Mexican Food

Paul Turner, Southern California North
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Charlie Woo, MegaToys

Policy and Planning Group

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Angela Beltran, LA County
Children's Planning Council

Dan Flaming, Economic Roundtable

Suzanne Foster, Pomona Economic
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Nuri Martinez, Pacoima Beautiful
Dowell Myers, USC
Katherine Perez, Forest City
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Maria Quezada, Forest City Intern
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Michael Woo, LA City
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Funders Group

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Daranee Petsod, GCIR
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Margarita Ramirez, Liberty
Hill Foundation
Greg Ratliff, Bill & Melinda
Gates Foundation
Beatriz Solis, The California
Endowment
Ellen Widess, Rosenberg
Foundation
Joyce Ybarra, Los Angeles Immigrants
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Labor and Community Organization Group

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Rini Chakraborty, Sweatshop Watch
Sharon Delugach, UCLA Labor Center
Sandra Gonzales-Castro, SEIU
Tom Holler, IAF
Robert Hoo, IAF
Bethany Leal, MIWON
Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center
Joann Lo, Enlace
Maria Loya, LAANE

Margie McHugh, Migration
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Alexia Salvatierra, Clergy and Laity
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Community Builders Group

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Sam Joo, Koreatown Youth
Community Center

Lawrence Lue, Chinatown Service
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Alberto Retana, Community Coalition

Paola Ruvalcaba, ELACC

Bill Watanabe, Little Tokyo Service
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Mark Wilson, Coalition for Responsible
Community Development

The Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) is a new research unit and part of the Center for Sustainable Cities at USC. PERE conducts research and facilitates discussions on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion and immigrant integration. PERE's work is rooted in the new three R's: rigor, relevance and reach. We conduct high-quality research in our focus areas that is relevant to public policy concerns and that reaches to those directly affected communities that most need to be engaged in the discussion. In general, we seek and support direct collaborations with community-based organizations in research and other activities, trying to forge a new model of how university and community can work together for the common good.

The Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) has as its mission to remake the narrative for understanding, and the dialogue for shaping, immigrant integration in America. Our intent is to identify and evaluate the mutual benefits of immigrant integration for the native-born and immigrants and to study the pace of the ongoing transformation in different locations, not only in the past and present but projected into the future. CSII thus brings together three emphases: *scholarship* that draws on academic theory and rigorous research, *data* that provides information structured to highlight the process of immigrant integration over time, and *engagement* that seeks to create new dialogues with government, community organizers, business and civic leaders, immigrants and the voting public.

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