The House We All Live In

A Report on Immigrant Civic Integration

Carnegie Corporation of New York

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Geri Mannion
Chair
Strengthening U.S. Democracy Program

Executive Summary

AMERICA IS POISED at an historic crossroads as its populace becomes increasingly diverse and integrated. For the first time since immigrants flooded through Ellis Island in the early 1900s, the nation is experiencing a dramatic influx of newcomers. Nearly thirty-three million people, or one-tenth of the nation's population, are now foreign born. One third of them arrived in the last decade.

As in the past, new arrivals come seeking opportunity, freedom and political asylum. Now, however, there is a difference in where they settle. While 70% continue to concentrate in the large gateway cities, 30% are now fanning out in suburbs and small communities of the South, Midwest and West. These nontraditional receiving state and local jurisdictions are oftentimes ill prepared for integrating newcomers into the existing social infrastructure.

While the nation has an *immigration* policy that dictates the flow of immigrants, there is no *immigrant* policy to meet the social, physical, civic and integration needs of immigrants and the receiving communities. Immigrants are the source of America's diversity, and the nation has framed a system of social justice to absorb and incorporate newcomers. While the opposition of some to the integration process has challenged the nation's democratic principles, the country has consistently endorsed the naturalization of immigrants with all the benefits of full and active civic participation. Becoming a permanent, legal citizen of a new country is an important part of civic participation and integration. One of the most valuable rights that immigrants acquire through naturalization is the right to vote, which affords them potential power as a new political force.

Despite the lack of a formal immigrant policy, a plethora of private, nonprofit organizations and policymakers in various states have responded to the growing numbers of immigrants in the last 30 years. Service providers, advocates and immigrant organizers on both the national and local level that didn't even exist two decades ago are now becoming the driving force in the immigrants' rights movement. As a result of the efforts of coalitions of these types of groups, the number of New York State's naturalized citizens, for example, increased by 31 percent (to 1.7 million) between 1995 and 1998. Other groups have organized national voter registration drives, provided bilingual ballots and poll workers, and sponsored annual visits to the legislative offices of elected officials. One organization in North Carolina, by sponsoring visits to Mexico, helps to educate state decision makers about the needs and problems of immigrants in order to facilitate the integration of these populations into both civic and social society.

What's lacking in this area, though, is adequate funding to generate more research, to replicate successful models of civic integration and to promote immigrant leadership and organization. To begin addressing the problem, Carnegie Corporation of New York has set its sights on identifying needs and encouraging responses that will direct resources toward increased and successful immigrant civic integration. [See recommendations below.]

This report, which draws on the insights and research of both national and local groups working directly on immigrants' rights, summarizes the current situation, offers projections for the future, and pinpoints areas of need. It provides funders with an informative guide about potential areas of support for immigrant policy issues and highlights the urgency of developing new sources of support for immigrant-related efforts, which are critical to the nation's continued democratic development.

Given the backlash against some immigrant communities, particularly Muslim, Sikh and Arab Americans after September 11, there are also increas-

ing challenges to discussing immigrant civic integration within the framework of domestic security. Still, America has always been, and continues to be, a welcoming home that harbors individuals of every ethnic and racial profile. A renewed dedication to the ideals of diversity is essential as the immigrant population grows and as America becomes a harbinger of a new global inclusiveness.

FUNDING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL immigrant policy to facilitate effective integration of immigrants is a reachable goal, but one that will require investment from philanthropy, government, and corporations. To meet this challenge, it is imperative to expand resources at the national, regional, and local levels. Following are some recommendations for funders to consider in helping immigrants fully participate in our nation's democracy and civic life:

- Recognize the changing national and local demographics, the strengths of diversity and how this diversity influences and redefines community and funding priorities.
- Support programs and services that help immigrants meet basic needs, such as health care and English-language classes, and establish a solid foothold in their new community.
- Fund programs that work to increase local communities' understanding of the immigrant experience; build positive relationships between immigrant and native-born communities; and engage these communities in collaboration around mutual issues of concern.
- Support programs that develop, nurture and sustain immigrant leadership in civic and political life.
- Support efforts to educate immigrant and other low-wage workers about workplace rights, fair wages and benefits, and opportunities to improve their employment potential.
- Utilize existing systems—such as public schools, parks and recreation—as vehicles to engage immigrant families in collaborations with longtime residents to improve the quality of life and educational outcomes for both immigrant and native-born children
- Invest in multi-sector partnerships among businesses, unions, community groups, faith-based organizations and government agencies to increase social, economic, and civic opportunities for newcomers and their families.
- Support public education and outreach efforts to encourage the streamlining of the federal naturalization process and offer support to immigrants at the local level for navigating the application process, including English-language and civics classes
- Fund proven voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts among new citizens, and invest in the development of new models that seek to reach underserved or hard-to-reach immigrant communities.
- Invest in immigrants' rights networks and coalitions to develop strategies, set a unified immigrant policy agenda, and advocate for state and/or local policies that provide both basic human services and opportunities for immigrants to become integral contributing members of society.
- Support legal services, advocacy and litigation to protect immigrants' civil rights and civil liberties and to expand opportunities for immigrants' engagement in our democracy.

The House We All Live In

A Report on Immigrant Civic Integration

What is America to me?
My neighbors, white and black,
The people who just came here,
Or from generations back,
The town hall and the soapbox,
The torch of Liberty,
A home for all God's children,
*That's America to me**

AS THE NEW MILLENNIUM dawns in America, a nation established by immigrants is experiencing the largest wave of immigration since the Industrial Revolution. In Florida, a young boy from New Delhi plays touch football with neighbors on the lawn of his family's half-million dollar home in a suburb that ten years ago exclusively housed white families. The boy attends the local public school and his family drives 40 miles every Sunday to attend the Indian Pentecostal Church. A few miles away, hundreds of undocumented Mexicans pick oranges to be sold to the Minute Maid Corporation. In Omaha, Nebraska, half the school students are Latino.

Immigrants include permanent foreign-born residents, refugees, undocumented workers, and non-permanent residents who work legally in the United States and live here for various lengths of time. One-third of the nearly 33 million foreign born arrived in the last decade, and their numbers stretch beyond the large gateway cities into the small towns and suburbs where they work, attend school, pay taxes and volunteer in their communities. According to the 2001 United States Census, 69 percent of Americans are white, while Hispanics and African Americans each comprise about 13 percent of the population. Asians and Pacific Islanders make up four percent and Native Americans one percent. Most of the increase occurred within the last 30 years.

What the change means for America is still unclear, and the reactions of Americans born in this country are mixed. Some argue that immigrants strain the system, don't pay taxes and take jobs away from deserving citizens. An African-American man who was attending taxi-driving school in Washington, D.C., expressed surprise and reservations that only one of his twenty-seven classmates was native born. "There are too few jobs to go around as it is," he said. "Many don't even speak English."

Others welcome the diversity of religions, food, and culture. Some believe immigrants are hard workers who appreciate American values of freedom and opportunity. Many American businesses need immigrant labor to keep them going and maintain a robust economy.

Our traditional democratic values of equality and inclusiveness, the tremendous influx of newcomers, and a new awareness about immigrant presence after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, has made many Americans think about retooling old ideas about the country as a "receiving society" and brought up questions about initiating a new national immigration policy. We grapple with questions about

**Lyrics from "The House I Live In," a World War II-era song by Earl Robinson and Lewis Allan*

full inclusiveness and civic participation. How do government, nonprofit organizations, private and corporate entities establish an infrastructure for immigrant integration and advancement that will overcome the existing structural and attitudinal barriers? How can immigrants be integrated fully into the civic infrastructure of America?

While the federal government has *immigration* policies governing the terms and conditions for entry into the United States, it does not have a set of *immigrant* policies to ensure the economic, civic, and social integration of immigrants once they arrive. Much of that responsibility has fallen to the states and cities, and only eleven states have immigrant offices or immigrant programs. And despite the creation of new immigrant advocacy organizations in the last 30 years, these groups can have only limited impact without a broader set of immigrant policies in place.

Carnegie Corporation of New York sponsored a meeting in November 2002 for leaders in the field of immigrant integration to address these issues and begin to chart future directions. Five interdependent categories of integration were identified: linguistic, labor market, educational, residential and civic integration. This report focuses primarily on civic integration, which is an integral part of integration into a democratic society, and how foundations can consider a range of grantmaking strategies to enhance this process.

WHO ARE THE NEWCOMERS?

ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE between immigrants of the past and today is their ethnic profiles and countries of origin. At the beginning of the 20th century, the large majority of immigrants to the U.S. (90 percent) were white and Anglo-Saxon, partly due to United States laws and policies that favored white immigrants, according to a study by the Princeton University Office of Population Research. Today, half the immigrants are from Latin America while only 15 percent are from Europe,

NOW THAT I'M HERE: WHAT AMERICA'S IMMIGRANTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT LIFE IN THE U.S. TODAY, A Report from PUBLIC AGENDA

As the nation realizes the need for a meaningful debate on immigrant integration, Carnegie Corporation of New York thought it was necessary to hear from the most important, yet least heard, voices of immigrant policy—the immigrants themselves. So in 2001, the Corporation provided support for Public Agenda, a research institution in New York, to conduct a unique survey of 1,002 foreign-born United States residents from more than 100 countries.

The responses were surprising and enlightening. An overwhelming majority of immigrants said that while the United States is not perfect, it is "a unique country that stands for something special in the world." A majority said the United States is better than their native country for economic opportunity, women's rights, good health care, an honest government and a good education. Three-out-of-four plan to make the United States their permanent home.

"They are as American as Americans get," said Steve Farkas, senior vice president of Public Agenda and director of research. "They believe in American values, such as hard work and making their own way."

The report, entitled, Now That I'm Here, and published in 2003, showed that while respondents said they were drawn here by economic opportunity, a larger percentage said they chose America for the personal freedom. "They have adopted the clear-eyed form of patriotism we see so often in those born here," said Deborah Wadsworth, president of Public Agenda.

Most immigrants also have a strong work ethic. Seventy-three percent said it's extremely important to work and stay off welfare, and only 18 percent said any member of their family has ever received food stamps. They also understand that English is important for success. Nearly 9 in 10 said it is extremely important to read and understand English, and 65 percent said they believe the government should

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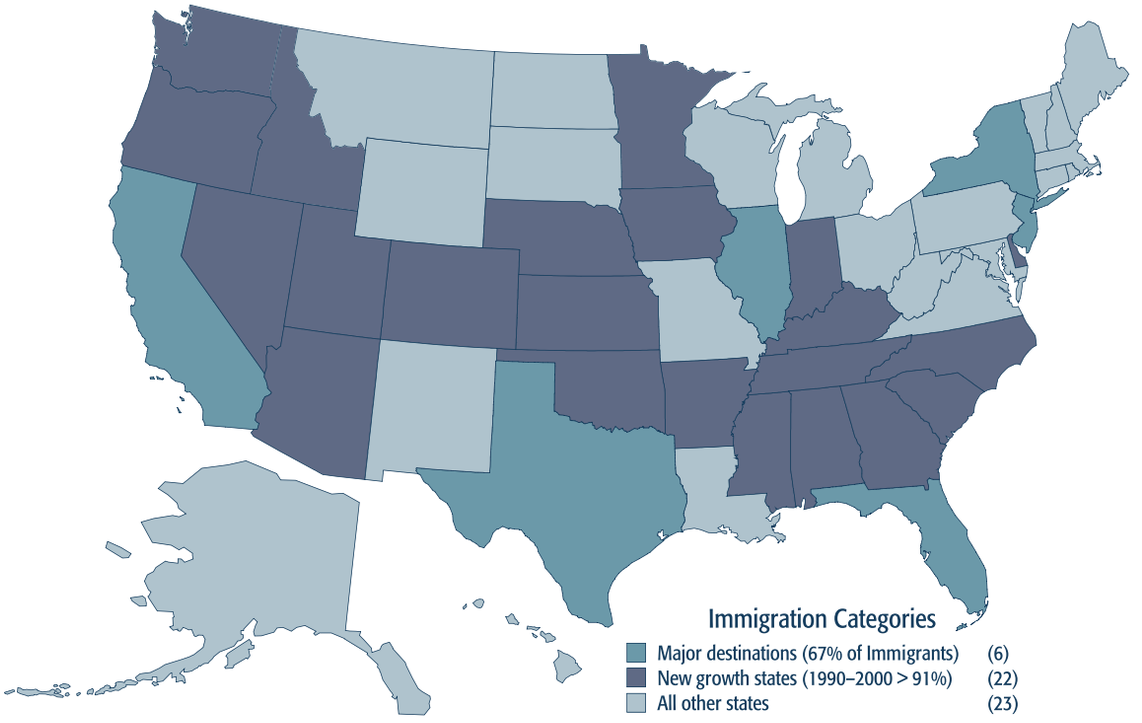
New Immigration Growth Centers



Reprinted with permission of The Urban Institute

require immigrants to learn English. About the same percentage of immigrants as the general public believes all public school classes should be taught in English.

Many noted the changes since September 11, 2001. Half of the immigrants queried said the government is a lot stricter about enforcing immigration laws, but a surprising 57 percent had a favorable view of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) even as its own leaders acknowledge serious problems in the treatment of immigrants and processing of paperwork.

A large majority of the respondents acknowledged they were aware of some discrimination by the general American public, and 18 percent said there is a "great deal" of it, especially against non-white immigrants. But when they talk about their own personal experiences, they paint a brighter picture. Sixty-seven percent said they have personally encountered little or no discrimination, and only nine percent said that someone was "offensive or rude" to them after September 11. Most immigrants said America is a better country than their home country in many respects.

The report also gauged opinions on citizenship. Respondents' motivation to become citizens ranged from pragmatic to sentimental. Some said it culminated a life-long dream to become an American and afforded them the right to vote. "I went downtown (to be sworn in), and I was the proudest woman on earth—I'm an American," said one woman in Los Angeles. Others became citizens to ease procedures for receiving government benefits, to travel, and to have better legal protections after September 11. Fifty-five percent said citizenship made it easier to get certain jobs.

"As the U.S. continues its ongoing debates about immigration, national security, terrorism and even the very identity of America itself, we believe that the country's foreign-born residents have a legitimate and extraordinarily important perspective to offer," Wadsworth said. "Public Agenda's purpose, and that of Carnegie Corporation, was to understand more about immigrants' perspectives and give voice to their observations and concerns."

according to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), a Washington, D.C., think tank created in 2001. One-third of the immigrants (about a million a year) are from Mexico.

Another difference among today's immigrant population is the number of undocumented immigrants, who make up one-quarter of all foreign-born residents in America. Most have arrived since 1990, and Mexicans make up half of the 8.5 million undocumented immigrants.

As in the past, immigrants come to America looking for jobs, and in many communities they are the backbone of the local economy. Today, a much larger percentage of America's new workforce consists of immigrants, transforming industries and the marketplace. A report by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies revealed that half of America's new workforce in the 1990s were immigrants, compared with only 10 percent in the 1970s. Despite the level of employment, only one-fourth of the immigrant workers have job-based health insurance, and the levels of poverty are higher for immigrants because the jobs are low paying.

Once in America, both documented and undocumented workers often become active and involved in their new communities. They are consumers, taxpayers and, in many cases, long-term residents who desire to become permanent American citizens. The National Academy of Sciences reports that in 1997, the United States reaped a $50 billion surplus from taxes paid by immigrants to all levels of government. Most immigrant families move from unskilled to skilled labor jobs including entrepreneurships, according to a California immigration commission. "Every state has a Chinese restaurant," an immigrant who settled in a small town in Georgia told a news reporter. "Americans depend on us to eat."

WHERE DO THEY SETTLE?

ANOTHER STRIKING DIFFERENCE among today's immigrants is their diffused settlement patterns in suburbs and small communities. For example, Illinois, which has an immigrant population that increased by 61 percent since 1990, has experienced a remarkable shift in immigration patterns in the last 12 years, according to a study by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. While many immigrants still migrate to Chicago, a significant number are now settling in the Chicago suburbs and smaller Illinois cities where they are changing voting patterns, government funding priorities, and policy emphasis.

A report by the Urban Institute shows that two-thirds of immigrants live in six states: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. Many immigrants continue to join families in the large gateway cities of those areas. But the influx of immigrants in those six traditional states declined during the 1990s as they began arriving, instead, in nontraditional states such as Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, and Utah. The foreign-born population in North Carolina, for instance, increased almost one-half million—274 percent—since 1990, according to MPI.

"In the past they would go to traditional receiving places where there were families, networks, and services," according to MPI. "No longer. Now they are dispersing to more areas without that support system." For instance, thousands of Bosnians were recruited by employers to work in meatpacking plants in Nebraska and Wyoming, but then found little corporate or government assistance to ease the transition. Many smaller communities do not have bilingual teachers, English-language classes, health care facilities, adequate housing or social services for foreigners. City governments in Boise, Idaho, and Gillette, Wyoming, found themselves unequipped to handle a large, newly arrived group of immigrants who were recruited by local corporations.

THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION

WHAT IS IMMIGRANT integration? The word "integration" reflects a change in the nation's attitudes since the 1900s when the word "assimilate" was traditionally used to describe the absorption of newcomers to the dominant receiving society. The word "assimilate," which means "to make similar," is no longer applicable.

Today, the word "integration" signifies a bi-directional approach and a process predicated on long-term interaction and mutual change. "Integration is a sustained, mutual interaction between newcomers and the societies that receive them that may last for generations," according to MPI.

VITAL INFORMATION IN THE VITAL STATISTICS

While the foreign born remain concentrated in certain "traditional" states like California, New York and Texas, there are new "nontraditional" states like Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina that have experienced a considerably large and rapid influx of foreign-born residents, according to the 2000 United States Census.

The Census also found that:

- California, New York and Texas have the largest numbers of foreign born; California and New York have the largest percentage of foreign born, followed by Hawaii and New Jersey
- South Dakota, North Dakota, and Wyoming have the smallest numbers of foreign born
- Five states—Mississippi, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, and West Virginia—have less than two percent foreign born.
- Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina have had the greatest increase in foreign-born population
- Maine and Montana had the smallest increase in foreign-born population.
- The Western region had the highest number of foreign born and the highest percentage of foreign born, but the South experienced the greatest percent change.

Here is a breakdown of highlighted states:

CALIFORNIA

- Foreign born represent 26 percent of the state's population
- The foreign-born population increased by 37 percent since 1990
- Most are from Latin America
- The three top countries of origin are Mexico, the Philippines, and Vietnam
- 89 percent speak a language other than English at home
- 39 percent are citizens
- 19 percent live in poverty

MINNESOTA

- Foreign born represent five percent of the state's population
- The foreign-born population increased by 130 percent since 1990
- Most are from Asia
- The three top countries of origin are Mexico, Laos, and Vietnam
- 78 percent speak a language other than English at home
- 37 percent are citizens
- 19 percent live in poverty

NEW YORK

- Foreign born represent 20 percent of the state's population
- The foreign-born population increased by 36 percent since 1990
- Most are from Latin America
- The three top countries of origin are China, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica
- Three-quarters speak a language other than English at home
- 46 percent are citizens
- 18 percent live in poverty

NORTH CAROLINA

- Foreign born represent five percent of the state's population
- The foreign-born population increased by 274 percent since 1990
- Most are from Latin America
- The three top countries of origin are Mexico, India, and Germany
- 82 percent speak a language other than English at home
- 26 percent are citizens
- 19 percent live in poverty

In a reciprocal arrangement, newcomers are encouraged to contribute socially and economically, thereby gaining access to the dominant system without marginalization. The receiving society, likewise, facilitates a receptive attitude and climate toward newcomers and change. But achieving balance is a complicated process. Through advances in technology, communications and travel, Americans know more about other cultures, and many newcomers know something about America before their arrival. Those advantages that facilitate easier integration also contribute to newcomers retaining extensive contact with their homelands. Unlike previous generations of immigrants, today's immigrants simultaneously maintain cultural, political, economic, and social ties to two or more societies. And because they come from every region of the world, America no longer has a "melting pot" of unidirectional receivership orchestrated by the existing society.

There has been debate about the word "integration." While Europe is content with "integration" when referring to immigrant policies, America still carries some residual interpretation and analogy to racial overtones assigned in previous civil rights struggles. Some have suggested that "community integration," or "immigrant empowerment" are better terms to define goals of equality. But without a consensus on new terminology, the word integration is currently being used.

THE PLAYERS

THE SHEER NUMBER OF immigrants and a recognition by both national political parties of the potential influence of immigrants on elections have made immigrant civic participation a salient issue and forged a movement involving private and public organizations that were nonexistent 30 years ago. The prolific list of immigrants' rights organizations includes coalitions of advocacy groups, grassroots service providers and immigrant organizers.

Advocacy organizations operate mainly at the national level and coordinate public policy, track legislation and federal regulations, and promote national immigrant policies. Meanwhile, immigrant organizers and service providers operate at the grassroots and community level. Unfortunately,

North Carolina: An Example of a New Model of Integration

The Raleigh, N.C., airport was bustling with corporate executives and public officials boarding a flight scheduled to depart the country. They were not headed for a business meeting or a conference, but a weeklong visit to some of Mexico's poorest communities in search of developing a better understanding of the 315,000 immigrants who have moved to North Carolina since 1990.

The delegation was acutely aware of these statistics: North Carolina has the country's fastest growing Mexican population; Latino/Hispanic enrollment in North Carolina schools grew 575 percent since 1990; and three North Carolina cities ranked in the nation's top four fastest growing Latino populations.

Their trip, one of several in recent years, was organized by the North Carolina Center for International Understanding (NCCIU), based at the University of North Carolina, which formed the Latino Initiative in 1998 to educate leaders about the driving force behind immigration and its effects on both Mexican and North Carolina communities. Among the delegation's hosts were members of the Latino community, who were eager to introduce North Carolina business leaders and policymakers to their home country. Between 1998 and 2002, 242 policy leaders and educators have participated in the Latino Initiative program.

The purpose of the program is to develop a network of bipartisan leaders who understand the cause of Latino migration, the needs of arriving immigrants, and the policy implications. During the trip, lasting bonds are created between the North Carolina leaders and Latino leaders. Upon their return, participants use the information they glean to develop new strategies and programs in education, health, public safety policies, and community outreach issues. Latino leaders come to have a better understanding of the systems or "standard procedures" under which the North Carolina officials are operating, and the officials learn to better understand the challenges facing Latino immigrants in North Carolina.

"Despite the perceived differences in color, language, and culture, the Latino and Mexican cultures

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are very similar to the traditional culture of North Carolina and to the values that make our state strong," said one trip participant. "And in getting past those perceived differences, if we can somehow create connections, we have a real opportunity to strengthen the state and be a healthier community."

During this particular trip, participants visited Chalco, a city of one million people who all live below the poverty level. Most Mexicans who have jobs earn only $3 a day, although the prices for meat and gasoline are comparable to the United States. The participants met Epifanio and Guadalupe, whose three oldest children moved to America and send home money for the four remaining children. They met a father who reluctantly deliberated which of his children he should send to America to support the family. "What if I were sitting in the living room with my children and said, 'You're going to have to go to Mexico and work to support our family. Which of you wants to go?'" recounted one participant from North Carolina. "These are the kinds of decisions that people in Mexico are making today. It's not, 'Oh, what a wonderful opportunity.' This is their only alternative, and they don't see any other choices for their family. It's just an incredible story to think about from that side."

Once in America, Mexican workers send much of their earnings home. The average single annual remittance from America to Mexico is $1,200, and remittances are the third largest source of income for Mexico. But a portion of the earnings remains in America, and Latino residents spent an estimated $2.3 billion in North Carolina in 1998.

Participants also attend workshops on how to provide or improve bilingual and culturally sensitive services in health care and education, to encourage immigrant civic participation, and to help communities resolve conflicts. NCCIU also works with about 350 state drivers' license examiners to help them communicate effectively with Latino customers. In 2002, NCCIU created Conexiones, a training program tailored for community leaders, educators, police officers, judges, elected officials, and business leaders to provide concrete data about Latino values and culture. NCCIU also sponsors international programs for educators and policy leaders to help them seek innovative solutions to school improvement.

these three groups traditionally have not worked closely because of their distinct interests and roles. They now recognize the need to coordinate efforts; maintain common goals; form consistent, ongoing partnerships; nurture communication; and avoid competition for limited resources. They also recognize the need to work with new allies such as business, good government organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations, chambers of commerce and voting groups.

In the last three decades, immigrants' rights organizations have worked with limited resources from government, corporate, and philanthropic organizations. But more resources are needed because of the growing numbers and needs of immigrants. For instance, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) has 200,000 voter registration forms from registered immigrant voters, but it doesn't have enough money to enter the names into a database for the essential follow-up of getting those voters to the polls.

Some new nontraditional players in the immigrants' rights movement have adopted immigrant issues as part of their larger goals. Amnesty International, which focuses on civil liberty issues, has recently been lobbying lawmakers to oppose increased scrutiny and security measures targeted at Arab Americans. Two powerful forces in American politics—business and labor unions—recently weighed in on the immigrant issue when employers rallied for more liberal immigration policies to fill labor shortages. In a historic reversal of its policy, labor groups in 2000 called for legalization of undocumented workers with an aggressive effort to enforce wage and hour laws. They also called for discussions with businesses to address the needs of new immigrant workers.

National and local advocacy groups are focusing on voter empowerment strategies to engage immigrant communities in public policy issues. These strategies include assisting immigrants through the naturalization process, offering nonpartisan voter registration and education at naturalization ceremonies, and providing bilingual translators at the polls. Many of these groups also meet with United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officials to help improve staff training at selected naturalization sites and provide advice on new regulations and procedures.

NATURALIZATION

Throughout its history, the United States has encouraged immigrants to become legally recognized citizens through a process called naturalization. Although the process can be excessively cumbersome and delayed by bureaucratic tangles, currently, 37 percent of American immigrants are citizens and 12 percent of those surveyed said they plan to become citizens. In 1990, more than three-quarters (76.4%) of immigrants who had resided in the United States for 40 years were naturalized.

According to United States law, an immigrant is a foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the United States as a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR). Immigrants can become permanent residents through family and employment sponsorships or through an annual diversity visa lottery. To qualify for citizenship, applicants must reside in the United States for five years (three if they are married to a US. citizen), pay taxes, demonstrate knowledge of United States history and government, and read and speak English.

After submitting an application and $310 fee to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the applicant has fingerprints taken and is screened by the FBI, which takes about 120 days. An INS examiner interviews the applicant, who must demonstrate English proficiency and answer history and civics questions. Approved candidates must take an Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance to relinquish foreign loyalties and to support and defend the U. S. Constitution and laws. Finally, candidates are sworn in before a judge or in an INS administrative ceremony.

Lack of interest in learning English is generally not a barrier, according to research reports. More common barriers cited were limited availability of English-language classes, time, cost, childcare and transportation. In New York City, there are fewer English language classes today than there were ten years ago although the number of immigrants has increased dramatically. As a result, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) has recommended an additional 50,000 class seats at a government cost of $40 million each year. Federal funding to states for adult basic education and English classes increased 49 percent from 1992 to 2000, and Congress appropriated $25 million in 2000 for English and civics education. But the funding has not kept pace with the dramatically growing demand by immigrants for English and civics instruction.

The process is further complicated by lengthy bureaucratic requirements and delays. INS studies found that applicants waited an average of 9 to 21 months for their cases to be adjudicated. "The problem is, it's like a meat factory. The volume is so intense," said one immigrant. The INS, plagued for years with excessive caseloads, has revamped the program on several occasions to reduce the delays.

On November 25, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the Homeland Security Act, which, among other changes, abolishes the INS and transfers all immigration-related functions to the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This change, the most dramatic in the 70-year INS history, will have far-reaching consequences for immigrants. Some groups have predicted that naturalization applications could grind to a halt with the transfer to DHS. Others have said it could bring improvements if previous problems are addressed through adequate funding and administrative oversight. Immigrants, like other Americans, want the United States government to prevent future terrorist attacks, but they fear that placing immigration services in a department explicitly created for internal security will jeopardize the immigration agency's mission of uniting families and protecting the persecuted, according to a study by NYIC.

Many immigrants surveyed by Public Agenda (see earlier sidebar: Now That I'm Here) felt the effort to become a citizen was worth the rewards, which included voting rights, holding elected office, sitting on a jury, working at federal and other jobs that require a security clearance, sponsoring family members' entry without long waits, traveling abroad for unrestricted time, and accessing restricted federal programs. Studies have shown that once naturalized, immigrants also take a more active role in the civic life of the country.

THE SETTING

A SERIES OF EVENTS HAVE created increased awareness and activity surrounding the need to develop an immigrant policy and encourage immigrant civic participation.

The Nineties

The 1990s was a pivotal decade as a small movement with a small audience was thrust into the forefront of immigrants' rights. The single greatest galvanizing force, other than the increased numbers of immigrants, was passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which significantly limited the eligibility of immigrants for federal benefit programs.

Reaction to this legislation facilitated the creation of new immigrants' rights organizations and collaborative activities on the part of existing ones. For example, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) and five other coalitions formed the Immigrant Welfare Implementation Collaborative, which then grew to include other national and local organizations. The Northern California Citizenship Project was formed with 70 collaborative agencies in response to the 1996 legislation, and expanded in 2000 to focus on civic participation efforts. Some groups adopted a "Fix 96" approach to successfully reinstate food stamp provisions through the Food Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2002. Other legislation, like California's Proposition 187, which barred undocumented children from attending public elementary and secondary schools, also prompted the formation and cooperation of new groups. As a result of the efforts by immigrants' rights organizations, Congress has passed a series of bills to mitigate some of the benefit restrictions of the 1996 legislation. But many of the eligibility decisions for block grant benefits have been transferred to the state level where requirements vary from state to state.

Anti-immigrant legislation also prompted the nation's largest naturalization rush in history, and many groups were highly effective in leveraging that interest to increase civic participation. Since 1995, for example, NYIC has helped over 200,000 new citizens register to vote.

September 11, 2001

On September 10, 2001, President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox were on the verge of an historic decision that would have

The Mixed Bag of Immigrant Policies

Over the years, the nation's immigrant policy has evolved from a patchwork of legislation, ballot initiatives, court rulings and bureaucratic regulations, resulting in conflicting and inconsistent state and federal laws. As a result, federal immigration and naturalization policies are not always aligned with local community goals. The clash in policies is aggravated by the lack of clear distinctions between documented and undocumented immigrants. Many families have members with mixed statuses. For example, the husband is legal, but the wife is not; or the children are legal but the parents are not.

Here are some other examples of inconsistencies in public policies, according to the Little Hoover Commission of California, an independent state oversight agency:

- While federal law excludes some immigrants from receiving Social Security benefits, some state laws offer supplementary payments.
- Many legal immigrants, like the undocumented, are excluded from participating in welfare reform programs.
- While it is illegal for undocumented immigrants to work, the IRS and some states collect income tax and issue refund checks to legal and undocumented workers alike.
- Undocumented immigrants are excluded from most Medi-Cal services in California, but receive services at community medical clinics.
- Local communities often base decisions about dealing with immigrants not on legal status but on whether they are law-abiding citizens and contribute to the community.

immeasurably improved immigrant policies between the United States and Mexico. The terrorist attacks of September 11 derailed those negotiations and, with much greater impact, triggered an immediate anti-immigrant backlash against the foreign born. Congress and the Bush Administration took a number of actions to prevent further terrorist attacks that have generated controversy about violations of immigrants' rights.

Passage of the USA Patriot Act and adoption of new federal regulations have given domestic law enforcement and international intelligence agencies sweeping new powers to detect and detain people suspected of links to terrorism. The result for all immigrants has been restricted admissions and visa requirements, increased Social Security checks and address verification, and limited drivers' license issuance. The United States Attorney General's office required thousands of men from Muslim countries to report to federal authorities for interviews, fingerprinting and photographs. In Southern California, where the second largest community of Iranians outside Tehran lives, 3,000 people demonstrated outside an INS office chanting, "What Next? Concentration Camps?"

Detention and deportation efforts have caused droves of immigrants, especially Pakistanis, to seek political asylum in Canada. The Department of Justice began enforcing a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act that it had ignored for decades that required legal permanent immigrant residents to notify the government within 10 days of an address change. The INS became swamped with notifications and no extra staff to process the changes.

The FBI and Department of Justice have also asked colleges and universities to voluntarily provide personal information about foreign students and staff, prompting objections from schools and higher education groups, which contended that the request is illegal and intrusive. The request followed another information-gathering measure by the INS to build a database to track the 200,000 foreign students enrolled each year in American schools.

"The lever that will likely prove decisive is how well pro- and anti-immigrant forces compete for the hearts and minds of the general public and policymakers," according to National Immigration Forum, an advocacy organization in Washington, D.C., "and following 9/11, whatever edge we enjoyed has been at least temporarily neutralized."

Post-9/11

Although the negative impact of September 11 cannot be overstated, the effects of that day have further galvanized the immigrants' rights movement and prompted some incremental changes. Although the Bush administration failed to deliver on a list of promised immigration reforms, it has been working toward a Social Security retirement system agreement with Mexico that would allow 13,000 Mexicans to receive $50 million in Social Security benefits cut off since 1996. Federal policies enacted after September 11 have awakened a new awareness about immigrants' rights. The FBI established an Arab American Advisory Committee aimed at strengthening relations between the FBI and the Arab Community.

Other efforts, including some unrelated to September 11, have been made to highlight the need for a national immigrant policy. In a progressive move, the state of California (where one-in-four residents is foreign born) outlined a specific approach for reforming and aligning federal and state policies in a report issued by California's bipartisan Little Hoover Commission*, an independent oversight agency.

"To its peril, California has not come to terms with the extraordinary challenges of a large population of immigrants," the commission chairman, Michael E. Alpert, wrote in the report's letter to the California governor. "By not squarely dealing with these challenges, the State will ultimately increase public costs, and delay the enormous benefits that immigration can bring to individuals and communities."

Among its recommendations, the commission promoted a program that encourages immigrants to establish residency and become citizens in exchange for priority over other immigrants in receiving social services. It also recommended the state advocate federal reforms that link immigration policies to community goals. In addition, the commission recognized that efforts to integrate immigrants are often complicated by confusing and even contradictory public policies.

"It is not just that some immigrants are ignoring federal immigration law, but the law—because

* *We The People: Helping Newcomers Become Californans,* report of the Little Hoover Commission of the State of California, June 2002.

it is so flawed—is overlooked by political, civic, community and business leaders," the chairman stated, adding that one-fourth of the state's 8.6 million first-generation immigrants are undocumented workers who pay taxes and purchase goods but who receive few basic services. "California did not create this problem. But it must impose some rationality on the confusion of policies that make it difficult to integrate newcomers."

"The state cannot quietly accept or suffer the consequences of federal policies that fail our families, our communities, and our businesses," the chairman wrote. "California needs to work aggressively to reform federal immigration laws to serve California."

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

ONE INTEGRAL ASPECT, OR SUBSET, of integration is civic participation. Integration and civic participation are symbiotic, mutually reinforcing, and a necessary condition and byproduct of the other. Integration does not always ensure civic participation but is a precondition for active civic participation. Civic participation can include attending a school meeting or community gathering or becoming a citizen, voting or participating in government. Civic participation is an indicator of successful integration and is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy.

Naturalization

The United States has allowed more immigrants to become citizens than any other country in the world. In the 1990s, 4.5 million immigrants became citizens, and it is estimated that another 7.5 million immigrants residing in the U.S. are eligible to apply for citizenship.

But not all newcomers take advantage of the opportunity. In 2000, the United States Census Bureau reported that 63 percent of the foreign born are not citizens, and there are a variety of reasons, including a lack of English skills. Census figures indicate that more than 21 million people living in the United States do not speak English "very well" although many want desperately to learn. Nearly nine in ten respondents to a Public Agenda survey (see sidebar: *Now That I'm Here*) said it is extremely important to speak and understand English, especially to gain employment. Of all the difficulties involved in coming to a new country, learning to speak English well was the greatest hurdle, they said.

In New York City, 89 percent of surveyed immigrants were taking English classes, waiting to enroll, or wanting to enroll in classes, according to the National Immigration Forum. And the transition from Spanish to English is occurring faster than previously thought. "We see the assimilation from Spanish to English is almost complete in one generation," said Roberto Suro, director of the Pew Hispanic Center. The survey found that six-in-ten Latinos born in America speak English while half that number are bilingual.

Other barriers to naturalization include attitudinal bias. Immigrants from countries without democracies are unaccustomed to civic participation. The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) reported that many of the 4.4 million Arabs living in the United States hail from countries that discourage political activity and, until they were shocked into action as a result of September 11, traditionally shied away from political participation.

Although Asian Americans are increasingly becoming incorporated into the American political system through naturalization and voting, Asian-born immigrants maintain strong ties with their countries of origin, according to a survey by the Asian Pacific American Caucus. The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium reports that limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with democratic participation and strong ties to their motherland prevent many Asian-Pacific Americans from becoming citizens.

The Public Agenda survey found that although a majority of Mexicans queried believe that becoming a citizen is very important, citizenship is less common among Mexicans, and they take longer to become citizens once they decide to become naturalized. They identify less often than other immigrants as being Americans, and 71 percent of Mexicans do not speak English when they arrive in America (compared to 26 percent of other immigrants).

Voter Education and Mobilization

One of the most important benefits of naturalization is the right to vote. Studies show that recently naturalized voters have higher voter participation rates than native-born voters. The immigrant population nationally is becoming recognized as a forceful,

growing influence in the electoral process, especially when they form voting blocks in nontraditional areas like the suburbs. In Illinois, for example, immigrants are becoming the fastest growing group of swing voters in strategic suburban battleground districts. "They have become the new soccer moms of the future," an Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights report stated.

Yet despite their increasing importance in the electoral process, immigrant voters are still underrepresented relative to their population. In California, for example, the ethnic composition of the voting population has shifted slowly compared to the increasing numbers of immigrants, according to a study by the Public Policy Institute of California. "Forty years from now, whites will no longer be the largest racial group in California, but they may still dominate the electoral process," according to the study. "Between 1990 and 2000, white voter turnout was about 10 percentage points higher than African American turnout, and about 18 percentage points higher than Latino and Asian turnout. That lower participation level among Latinos and African Americans can be explained almost entirely by lower income and education levels (citizenship is also a factor for Latinos). The lack of Asian participation may be rooted in cultural norms or beliefs about the value of voting. If current trends hold, in 2040 Latinos will represent 42 percent of the adult population but only 26 percent of the electorate, while whites will constitute 35 percent of the population but 53 percent of the vote."

Similar patterns occur in other states. In Arizona, Latinos are one-fourth of the population, yet they comprise 15 percent of the electorate. In New Mexico, the Latino population is 42 percent, but they make up 29 percent of the electorate. Of the nation's 39 million Latinos, only 7.5 million are registered to vote and 5.9 million actually vote, according to the National Council of La Raza's Latino Empowerment Project. La Raza says that little investment has been made to encourage Latinos to vote despite the potential for expanding the Latino electorate, as one-third of Latinos are under 18 years old. Organizers agree that there needs to be long-term investment in a systematic approach with a focus on infrequent and unregistered voters

Educating and mobilizing voters must continue between elections, and organizations that promote voting recommend that funding be made early in the election process rather than in the final weeks before an election. The most effective outreach is personal contact, even if it is labor intensive. The second most effective outreach is foreign-language-speaking media, such as Spanish television, radio stations, newspapers and other ethnic media.

The New York Immigration Coalition used several initiatives in 2001 to encourage immigrants to vote. The coalition recruited 300 bilingual poll workers, distributed 50,000 voting instruction cards in six languages, held 100 new citizen voter education events, and presented videos on polling procedures and voting machines. The Northern California Citizenship Project sponsored the "New Citizen Vote!" campaign to provide training, technical assistance and networking opportunities for campaign partners. The Organization of Los Angeles Workers launched a get-out-the-vote-campaign to get immigrants to the polls.

The results have been evident. The number of new Latinos in the United States House of Representatives increased by three seats in the 2002 election. On the state level, nine Latinos were elected to statewide positions and Latinos saw a net gain of 13 seats in state Senate and House legislatures, according to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. New Mexico elected its first Latino governor in nearly two decades, and the Colorado Board of Education elected its first Latina. Minnesota recently elected its second Hmong state legislator, and a former Laotian refugee recently won public office in Fresno, California.

Town Hall and the Soapbox

Like the Irish, Italian, and other ethnic groups who came before them, social and economic mobility—and integration—is often achieved in tandem with attaining political power. Immigrants who vote and are active in communities and government can be a powerful driving force. But the unifying identity of being foreign born sometimes ends with differences in ethnicity and the ability to integrate into the social, economic, and civic structure of America.

For instance, Latino immigrants make up five percent of the national electorate and, for the first time in American history, are surpassing African Americans as the nation's largest minority. But the

Latino electorate—which includes Colombians, Cubans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and others from South and Central America—is not monolithic in political, social, or cultural views. The Pew Hispanic Center study found that Latinos see themselves as a diverse and disparate collection of people with different origins and opinions. Because Latinos have both conservative and liberal leanings, political messages cannot be pat and general, and Latinos may not be as able to develop the same kinds of organized political efforts and exert the same concerted influence that African Americans have been able to in the United States.

The number of immigrants actively involved in the political and governmental process is increasing. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights recently organized New American's Action Day, in which 1,500 Latinos, Poles, Koreans, Arabs, Bosnians and Africans visited the offices of sixteen congressional representatives. The coalition's work with the National Immigration Law Center resulted in immigrant benefits restoration and an immigrants' service line item in the state budget. A similar annual drive sponsored by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition attracts hundreds of participants to the State House to propose legislative agendas and civic promotion strategies.

The Maryland Latino Coalition for Justice, formed in January 2000, has already helped promote the adoption of required Spanish-version state documents. They are also crafting legislative agendas that include a health insurance plan and driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.

Other groups, like Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) in Washington, D.C., advocate at the national level in the interests of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese Americans on such issues as welfare reform, naturalization and refugee protection and resettlement.

FUNDING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, *the immigrants' rights movement has become stronger, more diverse, more experienced and more accomplished. Nevertheless, a shortage of resources, the post-9/11 backlash and the pace of the ongoing demographic transformation have left civil society groups and public sector offices unable to respond thoroughly and effectively to the challenges of immigrant policy.* —National Immigration Forum

Establishing a national immigrant policy to facilitate effective integration of immigrants is a reachable goal, but one that will require investment from philanthropy, government and corporations.

To meet this challenge, it is imperative to expand resources at the national, regional and local levels. Foundations, government and corporations can support immigrant integration and civic participation in a number of ways, depending on their level of resources, issues of interest, geographic focus, and organizational goals.

Funders concerned about broad issues—education, workers' rights, housing and health care, among others—can support immigrant civic engagement strategies as part of larger social justice and community development efforts. Funders interested in building the immigrants' rights movement can support specific programming or advocacy efforts by immigrants' rights organizations. Those funding in states or regions with new immigrant constituencies can support much-needed human and social services, as well as capacity building and infrastructure development of nascent and emerging immigrants' rights groups in their community. All of these strategies work together and are, by no means, mutually exclusive.

Following are some recommendations for funders to consider in helping immigrants fully participate in our nation's democracy and civic life:

- Recognize the changing national and local demographics, the strengths of diversity and how this diversity influences and redefines community and funding priorities.
- Support programs and services that help immigrants meet basic needs, such as health care and English-language classes and establish a solid foothold in their new community.
- Fund programs that work to increase local communities' understanding of the immigrant experience; build positive relationships between immigrant and native-born communities; and engage these communities in collaboration around mutual issues of concern.
- Support programs that develop, nurture and sustain

immigrant leadership in civic and political life.
- Support efforts to educate immigrant and other low-wage workers about workplace rights, fair wages and benefits, and opportunities to improve their employment potential.
- Utilize existing systems—such as public schools, parks and recreation—as vehicles to engage immigrant families in collaborations with longtime residents to improve the quality of life and educational outcomes for both immigrant and native-born children
- Invest in multi-sector partnerships among businesses, unions, community groups, faith-based organizations and government agencies to increase social, economic, and civic opportunities for newcomers and their families.
- Support public education and outreach efforts to encourage the streamlining of the federal naturalization process and offer support to immigrants at the local level for navigating the application process, including English-language and civics classes
- Fund proven voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts among new citizens, and invest in the development of new models that seek to reach underserved or hard-to-reach immigrant communities.
- Invest in immigrants' rights networks and coalitions to develop strategies, set a unified immigrant policy agenda, and advocate for state and/or local policies that provide both basic human services and opportunities for immigrants to become integral contributing members of society
- Support legal services, advocacy and litigation to protect immigrants' civil and voting rights and civil liberties and to expand opportunities for immigrants' engagement in U.S. democracy.

Investing in immigrant civic participation can reap enormous benefits, not just for newcomers but for the community as a whole. The Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship, launched and supported by the James Irvine Foundation since 1996, is a case in point. Irvine took on a rare challenge to build civic capacity by working with and supporting the work of community leaders and small nonprofits to naturalize 10,000 immigrants in California's Central Valley. Building on that success, the Partnership has been engaging new citizens, other immigrants, and native-born Americans in community problem solving and community building around issues of common concern. Today, the Central Valley Partnership works with 12 partner organizations of diverse interests and goals with ideas emanating from the community. Projects range from citizenship and civic action to immigrants' rights and economic development.

Foundations and corporations can also support and encourage the government to play a strong role in immigrant integration, particularly in increasing service provisions and enacting legislation beneficial to immigrants. Seattle, for example, approved an ordinance that forbids the police and other city workers from asking about immigration status so that residents would not be reluctant to seek city services. Illinois has instituted an Office of Immigrant Policy, while Maryland has an Office for New Americans. Funders can also support advocacy to urge the federal government to establish an Office of Immigrants and Refugees that would coordinate efforts to facilitate the integration of immigrants and provide needed services.

CONCLUSION

IMMIGRANTS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE in the civic structure of America. Therefore, integrating newcomers into the existing society and creating a structure for them to succeed is a challenge to our nation that we must undertake if we are to uphold the fundamental values of justice, inclusiveness, and equality. Historically, America has proven itself to be both progressive and recalcitrant, at different times, about integrating immigrants into its society. Now, on the cusp of change that requires a proud display of inclusiveness and facilitation, Carnegie Corporation of New York encourages our funding colleagues at the local, regional and national levels to channel resources to address active immigrant integration and civic participation.

A unified, visionary approach to incorporate immigrants into every aspect of public and private life can prevent fractures in the nation's political, economic and social structure. Above all, the philanthropic community must remain diligent in focusing its responses on the strengths, rather than the weaknesses, of diversity.

Immigrant Civic Integration

November 6-7, 2002 Meeting Participants

For further information on immigrant and immigration issues, we recommend that you contact the experts who attended our meeting. For funders who are interested in joining an affinity group concerned with these issues, we particularly recommend that you contact Daranee Petsod, executive director, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

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