

NEXO

The Official Newsletter of The Julian Samora Research Institute
The Midwest's Premier Latino Research Center

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JSRI's mission is to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest and across the nation.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

University Outreach and Engagement
Julian Samora Research Institute

Julian Samora Research Institute
University Outreach and Engagement
Michigan State University
219 S. Harrison Road, Room 93
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-1317

Webpage: www.jsri.msu.edu

Email: jsamorai@msu.edu

www.facebook.com/JSRIMSU



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NEXO

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JSRI at Michigan State University is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge as it relates to Latinos and Latino communities throughout the Midwest and the nation.

Editor
Rubén O. Martínez

Layout Designers
Claudia Zavala
Marcos Martínez



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Julian Samora Research Institute
University Outreach and Engagement
Michigan State University
219 S. Harrison Road, Room 93
East Lansing, MI 48824
Ph: (517) 432-1317
Fax: (517) 432-2221
Email: jsamorai@msu.edu
Webpage: www.jsri.msu.edu
Facebook: facebook.com/JSRIMSU

The Relativism of Freedom



Rubén O. Martínez
Director
Julian Samora
Research Institute

I recently had a series of conversations with a graduate student who visited Finland this past summer through a study abroad course here at MSU. His focus was on learning about differences in social policies between Finland and the United States. Finland is noted for its social protection policies while the U.S. is noted for its neoliberal policies. The student visited me to discuss the respective approaches of the two countries' criminal justice policies. In our discussion the student pointed out that freedom in Finland has a specific meaning, namely, freedom from want.

That is, that individuals should be free from the demands of basic needs, which means that individuals should have access to free or affordable social program services, including education, physical and mental health, employment assistance, infant care, aging, and supplemental income assistance. In criminal justice, that view promotes the rehabilitation and personal development of prisoners, whereas the American model is a punitive model that emphasizes punishment. Those conversations caused me to think about the meaning of freedom here in the U.S.

Rooted in the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, the U.S. Government provides for formal freedom and equality. The Declaration of Independence, for example, holds that "all men are created equal" and have inalienable rights to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. Additionally, the Bill of Rights secures and specifies the freedoms of citizens by prohibiting the state from infringing on those freedoms. For example, the First Amendment states that Congress will not pass laws that prohibit the exercise of religion or limit the freedom of speech or the freedom to assemble. At the same time, it prohibits government from officially favoring any religion.

The concept of freedom is not only complicated, it is defined and interpreted differently across time and space. Today in the United States there is much talk about freedom, but seldom is it defined. It is typically used to refer to political freedom, as in the Bill of Rights, but it is also used to refer to economic freedom. Under neoliberalism the primary meaning of freedom refers to freedom from state intervention in the economy so that individuals are free to pursue their interests without government regulation.

These views on freedom lead to critical questions about the meaning and exercise of freedom in this country. Is formal freedom enough or should government by the people provide a minimum level of well-being, a material platform if you will, from which individuals can pursue better lives? Is economic freedom absolute such that economic actors pursue their economic interests and profits even at the expense of the commonweal? These are difficult questions to address.

In Finland, although neoliberal views are gaining ground, it is clear that material freedom, that is, freedom from want, is critically important in the organization of that society. In the U.S., on the other hand, the view of freedom holds that individuals should be free from hindrance. That is, individuals should not be hindered in their freedoms by government. At the same time, however,

they should not be hindered in their freedoms by others. The exercise of freedom by some persons should not negatively impact the freedom of others to pursue a better life. The underlying basis of this view of freedom is grounded in the "right to pursue" a better life and a better society, as presented in the Declaration of Independence.

However, how likely is it that the trampling of the freedoms of some by others can be prevented in a society characterized by immense economic inequality, as is the case in the U.S.? And if so, which freedoms, and how are they defined? In the U.S. the trend over the past four decades has been to limit the functions of government in a context wherein corporations have considerable power and influence.

A similar situation occurred at the turn of the 20th century. In 1909, John Graham Brooks, President of the Consumers' League, argued that the powers of private monopoly undermined democracy and subordinated politics to business interests by corrupting officials and legislators. The solution, he argued, is government regulation of private corporations. He further argued that officials and legislators should act on behalf of the social whole. This does not occur, however, where private monopolies have more power than government.

The view that private monopolies can have greater power than government is illustrated by the unwillingness of private monopoly leaders in the 1880s to participate in congressional hearings focused on their abusive practices in the economy. Further, some years later, David Rockefeller, Jr. rebuffed President Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to settle labor strikes in Colorado's coal mines, where there existed a history of armed conflict between capital and labor over working conditions and the rights of workers. Democracy, argued Graham Brooks, was undermined by the power of private monopolies to circumvent the law through "secrecy, cunning, and unscrupulousness." Similarly, George West, who reported on the conditions of the Colorado Strike, held that citizens who are economically subservient and must depend on the favor of the few for their well-being cannot be politically free.

Today, many argue that the U.S. has become a plutocracy; that is, a country ruled by the wealthy, implying that it is ruled for the wealthy rather than the commonweal. To practices of secrecy has been added a powerful force since Graham Brooks made his comments, that of intentionally shaping public opinion through the tactical use of mass media. Instead of the media actively functioning to promote an informed citizenry and thereby enhancing democracy, it has become one of the chief tools used by corporations to replace

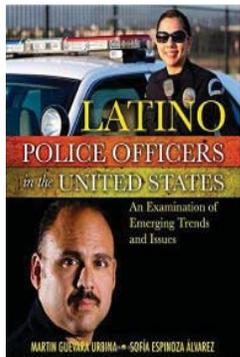
social democratic values (government for the public good) with neoliberal values (limited government based on the view that government in general is bad).

Ironically, that shift in values involves the use of government to accomplish the desired market-oriented changes. This shift points to the intense struggle occurring over the control of government, related societal values and competing visions for a better society. For example, we have seen over the past decade the passage of laws to limit the voting rights of selected segments of the electorate by making it more difficult to vote. Where does the idea to limit voting rights come from and what values are represented through these efforts? And relatedly, who benefits from stricter restrictions to voting rights? Moreover, why do so many voters accede to such efforts even after the courts have repeatedly ruled that such laws are unconstitutional?

Despite the emphases given by Americans to the ideals of freedom, democratic rights and equality, their views and sentiments can be shaped so as to allow the undermining of democracy and its processes. In such a context, what role do corporations, or rather the wealthy class that owns and manages them, have in the shaping of the policies and practices of government today? Graham Brooks argued that government regulation of private monopolies was needed to curb their abuses in the economy and in the public arena. He understood that government is not inherently bad; rather its utility is linked to regimes. That is, linked to the ruling interests of a particular societal period which have the greatest control over government. To protect democracy, he argued, corporations should be regulated by government. Regulating corporations, he argued, was based on a view that looked beyond the possible dividends of the next few months or years. It was a view that held that democratic politics should favor the commonweal and not the privileged few because they are strong and successful.

Today, the American citizenry faces political issues similar to those faced by their ancestors at the turn of the 20th century. It is clear that the government of the United States was established as a democratic institution, one intended to promote and protect individual rights and freedoms, but also the common good. Citizens, argued Graham Brooks, ought to shape and direct the conditions that give rise to justice and equal opportunity and shun those that make a mockery of democracy. The next stage of American civilization, he would argue, should promote the realization of freedom from want rather than the freedom to exploit. Only then can individuals realize their potential and make full their contributions to society and human progress. 

Latino Police Officers in the United States: An Examination of Emerging Trends and Issues



Edited by Martin Guevara Urbina & Sofía Espinoza Álvarez. 2015. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Pub Ltd.

Reviewed by Daniel Veléz Ortiz

This book engages a diverse group of contributors to take a critical look at the role and relationships of police as well as law and order agencies relative to Latino populations. The authors make good use of empirical evidence collected from government and academic research studies. Throughout the book, there is an emphasis on setting the historical context that situates current practices within a theoretical framework. This historical approach is evident in the preface, where the authors present the contentious historical precedent of police as agents of social control relative to minority populations.

Chapter one begins with a historical account of police and social control. Evident in this account is a pattern of discrimination and abuse of power on the part of police in the United States, especially with Latino populations. The authors make the point that immigrant status carries an increasingly negative attribute for Latinos, which results in various forms of profiling and abuse of power. These practices occur despite empirical evidence that Latinos have been found to be less likely to carry contraband than Whites.

Chapter two details the urgent need for more Latino police officers. Indeed, the authors state that police departments have been engaging in the recruitment of Latinos as a way to remediate the tensions between the majority White police force and Latino communities. However, the authors acknowledge that this strategy has not proven effective in many cases. Moreover,

the chapter goes deeper to make evident an underlying agenda to use Latino police officers as buffers for social control, thus disguising true oppressive policies, such as gathering intelligence and maintaining arrest rates.

In chapter three, the authors discuss emerging trends and issues in the recruitment and employment of Latinos in police and law enforcement agencies. Some of the data presented point to a general trend of incremental hiring of Latinos, yet, the effect is not proportional across all agencies and police departments. The trend shows that larger agencies and departments are making the most strides in the targeted recruitment of Latinos. Meanwhile, state law enforcement agencies are lagging behind with the smallest percentage of Latino sworn officers.

Transitioning to chapter four, readers get an inside look at the experiences of Latino and Chicano officers working in policing. The chapter opens with a very alarming statement that Latino police officers are more likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues due to exposure to prejudice and discrimination. The accounts reveal a pattern of racial joking, major language barriers with the community, disproportionate negative perceptions of Latinos by most members of the police, including Latinos. In this way, the prevalent culture is a (White) police culture, regardless of officer ethnic/racial background.

From a broader perspective, chapter five deals with broader ideological, policy, and strategy issues that influence police practices. This chapter discusses “racially neutral” policies that poorly address racial tensions in community policing. Here, a neoliberal approach is set as the catalyst to a culture of disposability, where data and statistics drive quotas that may result in treating citizens as disposable. Even well intended Latino officers must contend with longstanding policies and practices that foster profiling, harassment, and excessive force practices. These practices maintain a pipeline of minorities through the criminal justice system. The chapter goes on to detail anti-immigrant policies, for example

AZ SB1070 among others, that make it very difficult for police and Latino communities to get along. Despite these oppressive policies, the police do not have a significant role in changing them.

Chapter six presents research conducted in Colorado, Texas, and Utah that presents an applied example of how police officers are dealing with ideological and policy challenges. Major findings from these studies point to a pattern of perpetuating negative stereotypical institutional ideologies and social control mechanisms due to a lack of information about issues facing Latino communities. All cities researched presented disparities in profiling, arrests, brutality, and shootings against growing Latino populations. A recommendation is made to have proper training and retraining of all officers, including Latinos, to be more aware of discriminating practices resulting from unfair policies.

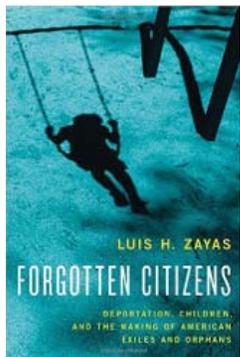
In light of disparities in the treatment of Latinos, chapter seven explores policing dilemmas for the future. One such dilemma is how neoliberal policies have created a pattern of incarceration which has disproportionately affected Latinos. The authors propose that police must go beyond serving citizens and be “reflective” of the community it serves and its needs.

In chapter eight, authors continue to make policy recommendations for a more equitable treatment and representation of Latinos. As a first step, there is a call for transparency as a way to improve the future of policing. Greater transparency involves collaborating with external review and monitoring mechanisms which would increase accountability. Further, police must “break the code of silence” and change it into a code of “openness and dialogue.” To adjust to 21st century contexts, police must improve their use of technology in communication as well as service delivery. Lastly, there is a recommendation for education in culture, language, ideological history, and stereotypes. In short, to have more culturally competent police forces.

The last chapter takes a reflective pass through history leading up to the transformation of police into a military and occupying force.

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Forgotten Citizens: Deportation, Children, and the Making of American Exiles and Orphans



by Luis Zayas. 2015. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by Pilar Horner

With immigration debates at the forefront of the upcoming 2016 presidential elections, and with some candidates calling for massive deportations and ubiquitous wall building, Dr. Luis Zayas has written a timely and important book on the plight of children who are United States citizens (citizen-children) but who live with one or more parents or siblings that are undocumented. Dr. Luis Zayas' new book focuses on the lives of these citizen-children in the United States and in Mexico.

This work sheds light on the lives of citizen-children, their social and psychological experiences, and the effects of immigration systems on families and youth identities. Zayas argues that repressive policies create two subordinate categories of children: exiles and orphans. These are metaphoric terms used to help illustrate the emerging strain that citizen-children must negotiate if their parents are deported, leaving them alone (orphans) or being compelled to leave the U.S. for another country even if those children have no cultural, social or educational ties to the parent's home country (exiles). He argues that these designations are crucial for illuminating the effects of "impersonal laws and insensitive enforcement" on families of mixed immigration status.

Zayas purposefully writes in a colloquial fashion, eschewing the distancing of academic writing in order to reach and engage a wider audience. He does this by introducing the lives through stories and interviews of the children themselves. The book is thus peppered with vignettes that range from individual children facing

acute psychological issues to adolescents negotiating their own identities within the context of fear of the forced deportation of their parent(s). The vignettes are horrifying. They retell the mostly hidden realities of a growing population marred by fear, distrust, guilt and shame. Zayas underscores that no child should have to live in such "fearful vigilance and guilt-induced self-restraint" in order to protect their vulnerable family. Yet, he argues, the current immigration system creates and perpetuates this paranoia.

Though the book is not heavy on policy or social analysis, it does offer some detail of the ambivalent immigration policies that have mired United States' history. Regardless, the author's purpose is to illustrate through vignettes styled as case studies the complexities of living in the United States as child of undocumented parents. The stories are haunting: families being torn apart, children suffering mental health stress and cognitive delays; youth struggling to make sense of an unjust system when they see their parents as hardworking contributors to society; parents struggling to remain under the radar but still advocate for their children's success.

If there is a critique of this book it is that the views of immigration remain solely through the lens of a Western culture. Theoretical frameworks and case studies are filtered through Western medical psychiatric models. There is little information that contextualizes the issues of immigration within a global economic context. Decision-making processes by citizen-children and their parents are analyzed within a U.S. cultural lens. Because of this, the book does not advance very much our political understanding of citizen-children.

But the work does contribute a social justice lens that is often ignored in immigration debates centered only on pedantic legal jargon. One example of this is found in the interviews with families in Mexico. Zayas notes that families are willing to risk breaking the law because they view Mexican socio-political structures as socially unjust and corrupt. He writes that families risk the difficult journey to the United States because they understand that there is greater opportunity for justice and a fair chance to making a living. He

likens these moves to other immigrants (our earliest immigrants in fact) and proclaims that the issues should be seen within a social justice framework. Indeed, the stories and case studies that Zayas' illustrates are overwhelmingly powerful examples of the long-term deleterious effects of flawed immigration policies on the next generation of Latino citizens.

Despite the lack of attention to globalized market forces and geopolitical antagonisms currently at work, Zayas' book is a powerful reminder of an often overlooked segment of the immigration system: citizen-children. These children, though they have all the formal rights and privileges of citizenship, suffer the disturbing impact of social inequalities without any long-term social or economic plan for improving their well-being. Zayas reminds the reader that these children are important and worthy members of U.S. society and that current immigration policy targeting them and their families must be challenged. 🌐

Latino Police Officers in the United States

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The authors call for restructuring the police with a call to "back to the basics" that align police structure and ideology with current multicultural contexts and demographic shifts, and are grounded in principles of equality and democracy. In closing, the authors state that the police of the future should be the cornerstone of American democracy, progress, equality, and justice.

This book makes an important and needed contribution by informing readers of the state of police relations with Latinos. It details the experiences of exclusion, harassment, brutality, and discrimination of Latinos. This book is innovative in exposing the issues about the experiences of Latino police officers. However, it could have been more effective in detailing strategies to change harmful and discriminatory policies and ideologies. The book would be appropriate for general audiences, law enforcement agencies, and criminal justice courses at the university level. 🌐



Neoliberalism Confronts Latinos: Paradigmatic Shifts in Immigration Practices

by Andrea Silva*

American immigration policy seems increasingly contradictory toward undocumented immigrants. Permissive immigration policies like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals contradict restrictive immigration policies emphasizing enforcement, detention, and deportation. This contradiction reflects conflicting political views relative to immigration policy and the fact that the U.S. Congress has failed to pass badly needed comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Absent from the public discourse is an emphasis on neoliberalism and how the proliferation of neoliberal ideas have altered how we understand and execute immigration policy. Three neoliberal principles—privatization, efficiency, and personal responsibility—have influenced the implementation of American immigration policy, increasing the detention, abuse, and death of undocumented immigrants.

The American immigration system has undergone a gestalt shift in the purpose of immigration policy and the treatment of immigrants through the incorporation of these principles. This essay examines the rise of a neoliberal immigration system that has replaced the principle of family reunification that was dominant prior to the 1980s. The immigration system has not always subcontracted its operations to private companies,

nor fixated on detaining and deporting immigrants *en masse*. Immigration is no longer a cherished American experience. Instead, it has become a feature of society assessed in terms of economic costs and benefits.

Importance of Immigration Policy for the Latino Community

Latinos are especially concerned with American immigration policies and enforcement practices for three reasons: cost bearing, representation, and proximity issues that disproportionately impact them. Latino households are more vulnerable to the material costs of restrictive immigration policies. In 2008, a survey estimated that fifty-nine percent of undocumented immigrants in the United States were from México, and eighteen percent were from Central and South America. Challenges for immigrants in accessing education, healthcare, and achieving economic mobility stem from restrictive, anti-immigrant policies and practices that limit or restrict access to federal or state benefits and privileges, such as a driver's license. Restrictive immigration policies, by virtue of the numbers of Latino immigrants, are more likely to negatively affect the economic security of Latino immigrant households.

Though immigration policy affects all immigrants, scholars argue immigration policy is racialized around Latinos. As political parties link images of Latinos crossing the border with immigration policy, even Latinos unaffected by immigration policy use it as a symbolic Latino issue. This issue becomes a device used by both Latinos and political parties to measure political representation. The extent to which legislators support or oppose comprehensive immigration reform becomes a rough indicator of how legislators feel about Latinos.

As an ethnic group, Latinos are in closer proximity to the costs of immigration policy change relative to other immigrant groups. The concept of proximity is the degree to which the costs or benefits of legislation are concentrated on a group or locality. In 2010, approximately 5.5 million children in the United States had at least one undocumented parent. Among these children, eighty-seven percent were from Mexico or Latin America. Consequently, when immigration policy threatens the deportation of undocumented parents or acquaintances, Latinos are more likely than other groups to pay attention. For example, a 2013 PEW Hispanic Research national survey found that sixty percent of foreign-born Latinos and forty-six percent of Latinos worry that they, family members, or close friends might be deported. The same survey found that fifty-five percent of Latinos are more concerned about having legal status that allows them to live and work in this country without the threat of deportation than about having a pathway to citizenship. Latinos are more likely to be proximate to undocumented immigrants, and this increases the intensity of how they “feel” the impact of federal immigration policy.

Latinos are the largest group entering the country without proper documentation and are being detained and deported. Seventy-seven percent of the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States are likely to have been in contact with the immigration system and live in fear of deportation. Thus, discussions of privatization, efficiency, and individual responsibility are most salient to Latino undocumented immigrants and their relatives. This group bears the consequences of this holistic shift in immigration policy. They brave life-threatening dangers crossing the Sonoran desert, and they face neglect and emotional and physical abuse in detention centers. Consequently, some die attempting to cross the border and others die in detention centers across the country.

Three Principles of Neoliberalism: Privatization, Efficiency, and Individual Responsibility

This section discusses three neoliberal principles that have influenced the gestalt shift in American immigration policy:

privatization, efficiency, and individual responsibility.

Privatization is the transfer of decisions formerly made in the public sphere into the control of the private sphere. Practically, it transfers public institutional functions and services to private actors. Efficiency values maximizing economic opportunities by minimizing transaction costs. When transaction costs are low, actors pay closer to the true cost of an item, leading to increased transactions and economic stability. Lastly, the neoliberal concept of individual responsibility emphasizes personal choices over structural conditions in evaluating individual success. This principle blames social or economic failure on individual willingness to engage in the system.

The inclusion of these three neoliberal principles within the motivation of immigration policy redefines the purpose of immigration policy. These principles have been transformed from economic principles into cultural values and goals for policy makers. Understanding the relationship between these tenets and the U.S. immigration system help to explain increased privatization and repression.

Privatization

States and capitalists have historically had a cooperative relationship, evident in the collaboration between the government and private interests to repress workers. A scholar once noted that government self-interest, not weakness, drives the state to support and advance the accumulation of capital. Under neoliberalism, free-market-fundamentalist elected officials have passed and implemented policies that shift government functions to private companies, including enforcement functions in which companies assume control of enforcement operations inside the United States and at its border with México. The most visible changes are privatized detention centers and subcontracting the building of a security and surveillance infrastructure at the border. This next section discusses the shift toward privatization in greater detail.

Privatization of Detention

A state working in the interest of capital continually seeks to maintain cheap, politically docile labor forces, like undocumented workers, to meet the interests of capital to lower the costs of production. At the same time, the state is also under pressure to address the immigration “crisis” arising from the human tragedy of a “broken immigration system” and the spread of anti-immigration sentiments across the dominant population. Reconciling what appears to be contradictory dynamics, the state has privatized the detention of immigrants, which has become more profitable than the old solution of deportation.

The privatization of detention allows the state to show citizens it is addressing the immigration problem while allowing private companies access to new specialized markets.

Although the Federal Government has transferred the operation of the immigration detention system to the private sector, this transition was neither necessary nor well received among all population subgroups. This transition was fraught with apprehension among some legislators and segments of the electorate. In 1983, Immigration and Naturalization Services began outsourcing immigrant detention to the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). Further, the GEO Group (formerly Wackenhut) began its business by imprisoning immigrants in the late 1980s. Today, business is booming.

Privatization of the immigration system gained momentum in 2003, when the Federal Government considered privatizing a division of federal workers within the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services that provided services to foreign nationals seeking documents or information at immigration offices. In early 2004, this plan came to fruition with the announcement that the Federal Government would be accepting private bids to fill approximately 1,100 federal immigration information services jobs.

Federal legislators became skeptical of the bid for various reasons. Ranking members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs at the time sent a complaint to then Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Thomas Ridge. Four senators complained the competition to privatize these jobs had grown out of Department officials' desire to meet the numerical goals for privatization imposed by the Bush Administration. Secondly, the senators complained about the hiring of private consulting firms Grant Thornton LLP and Booz Allen Hamilton to provide guidance in the privatization process. Grant Thornton LLP and Booz Allen Hamilton received the payment on their consultancy contract, but never produced a list of services rendered. Congressional representatives, like Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-D) argued privatization undermined the capacity of the Department of Homeland Security to protect the nation from those who would do it harm.

GEO Corp, CCA, and KBR, a Halliburton subsidiary company, were heavily involved in the invasion of Iraq and now operate, build, and maintain our immigration enforcement system. The government owns detention centers, but only provides about 30,000 beds. Hence, the Federal Government detains immigrants in privately owned detention centers or rented beds in jails and prisons. These private detention companies are now earning record profits through the increased demand from the government to create an infrastructure to detain and deport



immigrants *en masse*. In 2006, financial analysts speculated that detention centers were earning profit margins of more than 20 percent.

In 2008, CCA became the largest company involved in privatized detention, with plans to add 10,000 new beds that year. That same year, CCA was charging up to \$200 per day to hold detainees at the Don Hutto facility (designed to house entire families) in Taylor, Texas. This charge was more than four times the daily rate to hold convicted criminals (approximately \$54 per day). GEO Corp follows CCA as the second largest private detention company in the U.S., managing the day-to-day operations of detention facilities owned by federal and state governments. In 2010, CCA and GEO earned 1.69 billion and 1.17 billion dollars, respectively, from the detention of immigrants. Following the principle of privatization, control of the immigration detention system has been transferred to private companies, allowing them to oversee daily operations for a large profits with little competition from public funds.

Since 2010, the U.S. Government has paid for the detention of approximately 310,000 immigrants per year at a cost of 1.7 billion dollars annually. For fiscal year 2014, the White House and the Department of Homeland Security requested 1.84 billion dollars, or five million dollars per day of operation. In August of 2013, the House of Representatives decided to allocate more than the amount requested by the White House and DHS for FY 2014 by providing \$5.6 million per day, totaling about \$2 billion for the year.

Detention is not the only facet of the immigration system heavily influenced by the neoliberal tenet of privatization. Private companies have also influenced the militarization of the border.

Militarization of the Border

In addition to the privatization of immigrant detention centers, privatization also drives the construction of the border

wall, initially between the United States and México, and more recently in the call for one between the United States and Canada. Corporations involved in the invasion of Iraq and operating detention centers here in the U.S. are key contractors in the militarization of the U.S. Border. They are the primary providers of both personnel and equipment to United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the United States Border Patrol.

Between 1998 and 2005, the Federal Government spent \$429 million on border surveillance. In 2005, federal officials outsourced the construction of the border wall and the installation of surveillance equipment to private companies. Between 2006 and 2009, United States Customs and Border Protection subcontracted \$2.4 billion to build 670 miles of the first “layer” of border fencing. The first layer of the border wall stops pedestrians and vehicles from crossing while the second “layer” creates openings for Border Patrol vehicles and personnel. This layering system allows companies to build and bill for thousands of miles of real and virtual fencing across the border. These companies have an economic stake in promoting anti-immigrant views and the need for “fences” at the border among segments of the electorate.

Using technological advancements at the border began with Operation Gatekeeper in 1998, which incorporated a mix of equipment, including nightscopes, seismic sensors that detect movement, portable radios, four-wheel drive vehicles, and more. In 2006, DHS awarded Boeing a contract to build the virtual border wall at both U.S. borders. DHS reasoned that subcontracting was the best approach to detect, identify, classify, respond to and address illegal entry attempts, and launched the Secure Border Initiative. Boeing led a consortium of subcontractors to build the wall, one of which was Elbit Systems, an Israeli defense contractor that assisted in the construction of Israeli security walls in Palestine. The contract required Boeing to make acceptable progress on the virtual border wall for three years. If this initial performance was acceptable, the contract, SBInet, offered an optional one-year continuation. The contract guaranteed Boeing 67 million dollars over three years, but experts speculated the final cost could be as high as 30 billion dollars. In 2009, in spite of numerous errors, concerns, and problems with construction, the Federal Government extended the SBInet contract.

In 2010, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano announced that SBInet was plagued with cost overruns and missed deadlines and would end that year. Eager to transition their technologies from the battlefield to the border, other private companies stepped up to sell their surveillance technologies to the government. Companies like Northrop Grumman, Ericsson,

and Raytheon regularly bid to provide new equipment to survey and capture undocumented immigrants crossing the border. Technological advancements include surveillance blimps and unmanned drones originally used by the military in Afghanistan and repurposed for border operations.

Each blimp costs between one and five million dollars, while each unmanned predator drone costs between 12 and 18.5 million dollars. Border Patrol has crashed two of these unmanned drones as recently as January of 2014. In 2006, an unmanned drone crashed when its’ remote pilot, working for General Atomics, a private manufacturer of reconnaissance drones, “turned off the engine by mistake,” missing a neighborhood by a mere one thousand feet. Nevertheless, the government recently awarded a contract to General Atomics worth up to 443 million dollars. For this trouble and cost, of the 327,577 undocumented migrants arrested on the border in 2011, unmanned drones were credited with capturing only 4,865.

After the surge in Iraq and Afghanistan, military contractors saw border militarization as an avenue to continue making similar profits. Recently Northrup Grumman began pitching its *Vehicle Dismount and Exploitation Radar* (VADAR) to DHS, offering to repurpose this plane, originally used to hunt insurgents in Afghanistan, for use on the border. Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics recently bid on multi-billion dollar contracts to build and install radar and long-range camera systems along the border. As a result of this web of contracting, lack of accountability and oversight, the total cost of border militarization is uncertain, but likely to be higher than contract amounts. Already, the complexity and number of contractors and projects have cost American taxpayers tens of billions of dollars since 2005. This is the transfer of wealth from the public to the private sphere.



New Faces at JSRI



Dr. Juan David Coronado joins the Julian Samora Research Institute as a postdoctoral scholar. He previously held a Lecturer position at The University of Texas-Pan American, located in his hometown of Edinburg, Texas. A social historian, Coronado earned a doctoral degree in history at Texas Tech University. His dissertation, *'I'm Not Gonna Die in this Damn Place:*

Manliness, Identity, and Survival of the Mexican American Vietnam POW, lies at the intersection of Mexican American, military, U.S. history, and gender studies. Currently, he is working on a photograph book on baseball in South Texas and on converting his dissertation into a book-length manuscript. 🌟



Jamie Wing is the administrative assistant at JSRI, joining the unit in March, 2015. She has worked at MSU most of her career, mostly in research and administrative units. She is a Davenport University dual graduate, earning an Associate degree as an Executive Office Assistant and a Bachelor degree in Business Administration (BBA). Her office

responsibilities include grant award monitoring, budgeting, and publications. Jamie has lived in the greater Lansing area all of her life. She grew up on a Holstein dairy farm and currently has 4 dogs and a cat. When not at work, her interests include animal welfare and rescue and world history and events. 🌟



Claudia Zavala is a senior at MSU majoring in Media and Information with a concentration in Interactive and Social Media where she focuses on web development. She is also pursuing a minor in Information Technology. Claudia was born in Anaheim, California but was raised in Detroit, Michigan. At JSRI, she works with publications and as a transcriber. She

enjoys going to music festivals and traveling. After college, her career goal is to become a front-end developer. 🌟



Shanika D. Kidd is a sophomore at MSU. Her major is Pre-nursing with a minor in African and African American Studies. Shanika was born in Big Rapids, Michigan and was raised in Muskegon. After finishing college she plans on working in a children's hospital in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and starting a nonprofit, mentoring organization for young ladies

across Michigan who plan on attending a 4-year university. In her free time she enjoys reading, writing, and traveling. 🌟

JSRI Scholarship Recipients 2015-2016



Gabriela López-Zerón is a second-year doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in Couple and Family Therapy. She is an Honduran-born Latina committed to the reduction of health disparities among Latino communities. Gabriela is the project manager for a study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse

(NIDA) focused on the cultural adaptation of an evidence-based parenting intervention for Latino immigrant parents with adolescent children in Detroit, MI. She is actively involved in the community through her service and research. She is a practicing clinician who delivers mental health services to a wide range of clients in the greater Lansing community, including low-income, Spanish-speaking individuals, couples, and families. 🌟



Carolina Vasquez is a senior at MSU majoring in Social Work. She was born and raised in Michoacán, Mexico and in 2005 moved to the United States in pursuit of opportunities for a better life. Once in the United States, she faced language barriers that motivated her to enroll at Lansing Community College (LCC) to attend English as a Second Language classes (ESL). After

completing ESL classes, she took the required courses to transfer to Michigan State University. She is an Undergraduate Student Researcher in the College of Social Sciences and hopes one day to become an academic advisor at a major university. She hopes to inspire young people, especially Latinos, to pursue a higher education degree and motivate youth in general to continue their education. 🌟

Latino-Focused Webinar Season Announced for 2015-2016

Since 2012, JSRI has been working with leading scholars to bring a series of webinars to the public. Working with NCERA-216, the interstate initiative on Latinos and Immigrants in Midwestern Communities, University of Missouri – Extension, and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, the current webinar series will bring several scholars to present during the 2015-2016 academic year. These webinars focus on issues related to research, practice, and/or policies that affect Latinos and immigrants in the Midwest and across the United States. Scholars and practitioners share their latest research and best practices, openly discuss with participants the implications of their work, and discuss directions for future research and practice.

Webinars are free and participants will have an opportunity to ask questions directly to presenters via online chat. These webinars grew from the annual meetings of NCERA-216, which links scholars, practitioners and policymakers with important research agendas to advance the well-being of Latinos and immigrants in the Midwest and the United States.

Past webinars can be found at: <http://www.jsri.msu.edu/ncera-216/ncera-webinars>. All Webinars are sponsored by NCERA-216, Latino and Immigrants in Midwestern Communities, and University of Missouri – Extension, the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University, and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

Please mark your calendars with the following dates:

November 18, 2015, 12pm CST, 1pm EST
"Latinos 2025: A Needs Assessment of Latino Communities in Southeast Michigan"
Dr. Rubén Martínez, MSU

December 2, 2015, 12-1pm CST, 1pm EST
"The Dynamics of Latino-Owned Businesses with Comparisons to other Ethnicities"
Craig Carpenter, PhD Student, MSU

February 3, 2016, 12pm CST, 1pm EST
"Understanding acculturation and integration of Latino newcomers and long-term residents in rural communities"
Drs. Corinne Valdivia, Lisa Y. Flores and Stephen C. Jeanetta, University of Missouri

May 5, 2016, 12pm CST, 1pm EST
"The Dynamics of Latino-Owned Businesses with Comparisons to other Ethnicities"
Dr. Onésimo Sandoval, St. Louis University

If you would like to find out more about presenting your research or best practices in one of our webinars please contact Dr. Pilar Horner at phorner@msu.edu. 

MI Latino/a Business Statewide Summit 2015



On August 21, 2015, the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University (MSU) held the Michigan Latino/a Business Statewide Summit 2015 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. The event, titled "Building a Business Ecosystem for Latino/a Entrepreneurs in Michigan," focused on Latino/a community empowerment through Latino/a business development. Dr. Rubén Martínez, Director of the Julian Samora Research Institute, welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the event. In his introduction, he thanked the partnering organizations MI ALMA, the Latino Business and Economic Development Center at Ferris State University, and the Center for Community and Economic Development at Michigan State University for helping organize the event. He also thanked the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives at Michigan State University for co-sponsoring the event.

Dr. Martínez highlighted the changes in the number of Latino businesses in Michigan, indicating that they increased significantly from 2007 to 2012. He went on to discuss persistent issues the Latino/a business community in Michigan faces, including the lack of regulatory business information in Latino communities, lack of access to capital, the need to move from labor intensive to capital intensive businesses, and lack of access to supportive services. He emphasized the overarching theme of the summit – promoting community empowerment through business growth. Dr. Martínez also promoted the development of a perspective that leads to Latino-to-Latino-business transactions, an increase in solidarity among Latino/a communities, and educational attainment.

A combination of scholars, administrators, civic, and business leaders engaged in the day-long event. Presenters shed light on a range of topics such as Latino/a economic development, challenges and opportunities for Latino/a businesses, growth of Latino/a industries, working with large firms, and Latino/a community empowerment.

Continued on page 23



Latinos in Southeast Michigan

by Rubén Martínez

With support from the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan and the William Davidson Foundation, the Julian Samora Research Institute completed and made public its study on the well-being of Latino communities in Southeast Michigan. The region is comprised of seven counties: Livingston County, Macomb County, Monroe County, Oakland County, Saint Clair County, Washtenaw County, and Wayne County.

Historically, Southeast Michigan, especially Detroit, has been a destination site for Latinos. More recently, there has been migration from Detroit to the suburbs, especially the downriver communities such as Allen Park, Lincoln Park, Melvindale and Taylor, all of which are in Wayne County. They are also in Pontiac, Auburn Hills, Farmington Hills, Howell, Brighton and several other cities in the region, albeit in smaller numbers.

It is well known that the Latino population has increased significantly over the past two decades across the United States and is projected to reach 29 percent of the total U.S. population by 2060. Today, Latinos comprise 4.8 percent of the population in Michigan. Almost two-fifths of them live in Southeast Michigan. Another major concentration is found in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, which is a rapidly growing area of the state.

The following is excerpted from the executive summary of the report *Latinos 2025: A Needs Assessment of Latino Communities in Southeast Michigan*, which can be found at the following URL: www.jsri.msu.edu.

Latinos 2025: Executive Summary

This report uses various secondary sources and primary data collected through focus groups of young adults, adults, seniors, and local community and business leaders to assess the well-being of Latinos in Michigan and Southeast Michigan. The report draws on data from the U.S. Census American Community Surveys (ACS), the 2010 Decennial Population Census, the U.S. Census Population Estimations and Projections, Current Population Surveys (CPS) Supplements (December and November), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the American College Testing Program, ACT National Scores Report, the College Board, College-Bound Seniors, the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program Data, and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). It also uses information from various studies on Latino community needs to provide a portrait of Latino communities in Southeast Michigan.

The primary objective of this report is to assess the well-being of Latinos in Michigan and Southeast Michigan by identifying community issues that impact their daily lives in particular and in common with other populations. The analysis in this report addresses the following research questions: 1) How does the well-being of the Latino population compare to other demographic groups?, and 2) What are the critical needs of the Latino communities in Southeast Michigan? Moreover,

the analysis highlights findings about needs that go unmet and lead to recommendations to address them in order to improve the well-being of Latinos in Southeast Michigan. The recommendations, we believe, have relevance for other Latino communities in Michigan, and in many cases apply to Latinos in other communities in the Midwest and the nation.

Latinos contribute to the economy of Michigan as business owners and entrepreneurs, workers in agriculture, construction, services, and other critical sectors of the economy, and as consumers. However, they also face social, economic, and political challenges. In this report, we look at how Latinos compare to other demographic groups in Southeast Michigan and across the state of Michigan on six important areas: education, economic well-being, health and health behaviors, civic engagement, community well-being and immigration. We examine indicators in these areas by race/ethnicity and, whenever possible, by county in Southeast Michigan. A profile of selected cities in Southeast Michigan where focus groups were conducted is provided in Appendix 4. In general, focus group participants spoke well of the opportunities afforded by the industries and service organizations in Southeast Michigan. They also spoke of the challenges confronted in daily life.

Demographics

In 2013, the Latino population was estimated at 436,358, or 4.2 percent of the total Michigan population. The distribution of other population groups was 77 percent Non-Hispanic Whites, 13.7 percent African Americans, 2.4 percent Asians, 0.7 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and 2 percent Other or two or more races. In Southeast Michigan, Latinos reside in each of the seven counties but are most numerous in three counties: 1) Wayne County, especially in Detroit; 2) Oakland County, especially in Pontiac; 3) and Macomb County.

Latinos are increasingly shaping the demographic composition of Michigan's populations. While the total population in Michigan has been decreasing since 1990, the Latino population has increased every year between 1990 and 2013. Southeast Michigan experienced a Latino population growth of about 40 percent between 2000 and 2013, while there was a total population decline of almost 3 percent mostly due to out-migration of Non-Hispanic White and Black/African American populations. Detroit, in particular, had a Latino population growth of almost 11 percent between 2000 and 2013, but also had a loss in its overall population of almost 27 percent. The Latino population is likely to continue to grow more than non-Latino populations in the coming decades, mostly due to a combination of demographic processes including a higher fertility rate, lower



mortality rate, and an immigration rate (lower than previous years) from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The Latino population is relatively young as compared to the non-Hispanic White population. For example, there are about seven times as many children under 15 years of age as there are persons 65 years of age and older among Latinos. By contrast, the non-Hispanic White population has a lower proportion of children and a greater proportion of older population (65 years and older). In addition, Latinos have a larger proportion of the population of childbearing ages (15-44 years) as compared to the non-Hispanic White population.

The Latino population is very diverse and includes peoples from different Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain. The majority of Latinos in Michigan are of Mexican origin, accounting for 74 percent of Latinos in 2011-2013. The remaining Latino population groups are from Puerto Rico (9%), Central America (5%), South America (3%), Cuba (2%), Dominican Republic (1%), and other Latin American countries (5%).

Regarding marital status, 42 percent of Latinos in Michigan in 2011-2013 were married, 43 percent never married, 10 percent divorced, 3 percent separated, and 3 percent widowed. About 46 percent of Latino households were married-couple families, 19 percent female-headed families without the presence of a spouse, 8 percent male-headed families without a spouse present, and 27 percent were non-family households. Latino households tend to be larger than non-Latino households. In 2010, the average household size of Latino households was estimated at 3.23 persons compared to 2.44 in non-Hispanic White households.

Education

Perhaps the most important indicator of the ability of Latinos to navigate American society and in critical need of improvement

is their human capital (i.e., the skills and knowledge that are associated with upward socio-economic mobility). The educational attainment of Latinos in Michigan mirrors that of the United States. In 2011-2013, about 16 percent of Latinos (25 years of age and older) in Michigan had at least a Bachelor's degree. This is significantly lower than the educational attainment among non-Hispanic Whites (27%) and Asians (31%). The proportion of Latinos with at least a Bachelor's degree is highest in Livingston County (about 33%), followed by Oakland (31%) and Washtenaw County (30%), and Monroe County (10%), and is lowest in Detroit (4%).

The academic achievement of Latino children in elementary and high schools is one of the earliest and most powerful predictors of whether they will develop their potential human capital and become better able to take advantage of and, in some cases, create opportunities in society through their adult lives. We find race/ethnic variations in children's reading and mathematics achievement levels in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. Asian and White students score at higher rates at or above proficient levels in reading and mathematics than Latino and African American students.

Latino youths (16- to 24-year olds) are more likely to drop out of school than other race/ethnic youths in Michigan. Using the status dropout rate¹, the percentage of 16- to 24- year-olds in 2009-2013 who were high school dropouts was almost 7 percent in Michigan. The status dropout rate was higher among Latinos (15%) than American Indians/Alaska Natives (9%), African Americans (10.4%), non-Hispanic Whites (5.2%), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (3.4%). Using the cohort dropout rate², almost 10 percent of all high school students (4-year 2014 graduation cohort) in school year 2013-2014 in Michigan dropped out before graduation. African American students had the highest cohort dropout rate in the state (17.1%), followed by Latino (15.2%), American Indian (14.3%), Native Hawaiian (11.4%), non-Hispanic White (7.3%), and Asian (5.1%) students.

In school year 2013-14, 79 percent of high school students in Michigan (4-year 2014 graduation cohort) graduated on time with a regular diploma. Among all high school students in Michigan (4-year 2014 graduation cohort) in the 2013-2014 school-year, Asians/Pacific Islanders had the highest graduation rate (88.7%), followed by non-Hispanic Whites (82.9%), Latinos (68.8%), American Indians/Alaska Natives (64.8%) and African Americans (64.5%).

Our results also indicate that Latino, along with African American and American Indian/Alaska Native, youths were less likely than non-Hispanic White and Asian youths to be enrolled in colleges and universities. We find that between 2009-2013, 49.2

percent of non-Hispanic White and 72.3 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander 18 to 24-year olds were enrolled in 2- to 4-year colleges or universities. By comparison, only 36.7 percent of Latino, 35.1 percent of African American, and 37.1 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native 18- to 24-year olds were enrolled in 2- to 4-year colleges or universities.

Focus Group Findings—Education

Focus group participants spoke well of the opportunities afforded by the industries and service organizations in Southeast Michigan. They also spoke of the many obstacles that residents confront and seek to overcome in daily life. In the area of education they highlighted the low expectations set for students by school personnel and the absence of bilingual/bicultural personnel in schools. They pointed to the “warehousing” of students in Detroit public schools, where students are expected to perform poorly. In particular, they noted that families, especially immigrant families, are not well equipped to guide their children successfully in navigating the education system. As a result of all of these factors, Latino students drop out of school in high numbers and become potential victims of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Economic Well-Being

Income and Poverty

An important area in need of attention for improving the well-being of Latinos in Southeast Michigan and Michigan is their economic status. The median household income in Michigan in 2009-2013 was estimated at \$47,793 (in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars), compared to \$36,702 for Latinos, who were much lower than the state average. In the Southeast area, the highest median household income was in Livingston County (\$72,918), followed by Oakland (\$64,917), and the lowest median household income was in Wayne County (\$40,160). For Latino households, the highest median household income was in Livingston County (\$75,143) and the lowest median household income was in Wayne County (\$36,123). Detroit had a median household income of \$24,970. Latinos in Detroit had a median household income of \$29,419.

We find that in 2009-2013, approximately 30 percent of the Latino population in Michigan was in poverty. This was significantly higher than the overall poverty rate of 17 percent in Michigan. In comparison, the poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites was 12.6 percent; 14.4 percent for Asians, 25.4 percent for Native Americans; and 34.9 percent for African Americans. Among the counties in Southeast Michigan, Latinos in Wayne County had the highest poverty rate at 29 percent. The lowest Latino poverty rate was in Livingston County at 14 percent.

Latinos in Detroit had a poverty rate of 41 percent.

In 2009-2013, nearly 24 percent of children in Michigan were living in poverty. In Southeast Michigan, poverty was more prevalent among children in Wayne County (35.8%) than in any other county. More alarming, a majority of children (55.1%) in Detroit live in poverty. The lowest poverty rate among children was in Livingston County (7.4%). In terms of race/ethnicity, African American children (48.4%) had the highest poverty rate, followed by Latino children (35.5%), American Indian or Alaska Native children (32.3%), White (16.4%) and Asian and Pacific Islander children (14.2%). The historical race/ethnic minority groups all had twice the poverty rate of Whites.

Employment and Unemployment

Latinos in Michigan have higher labor force participation than other race/ethnic groups. We find that the labor force participation rate for Latinos 16 years and above in 2011-2013 was 67.4 percent, compared to 61.8 percent for non-Hispanic Whites; 56.3 percent for African Americans; 57.4 percent for Native Americans; and 63.7 percent for Asians. Among the counties in Southeast Michigan, Latinos in Macomb and Oakland Counties had the highest labor force participation (71%). In contrast, Latinos in St. Clair (65%), Wayne, and Monroe Counties (66%) had the lowest labor force participation rates at 65 percent, which was still higher than the other groups at the state level. The labor force participation rate for Latinos in Detroit was estimated at 63 percent.

In 2011-2013, the unemployment rate in Michigan was 14 percent. The unemployment rate for Latinos was estimated at 15.8 percent, compared to 9.3 percent for non-Hispanic Whites, 23.2 percent for African Americans, 15.7 percent for Native Americans, and 6.6 percent for Asians. Among the counties in Southeast Michigan, Latinos in Wayne County had the highest unemployment rate (18%), followed by those in

St. Clair County (16.6%). Latinos in Livingston County had the lowest unemployment rate (6.3%). Detroit had an overall unemployment rate of 28.5 percent and Latinos in Detroit had an unemployment rate of 22.3 percent.

In 2009-2013, Latinos were more likely than other population groups to work in farm-related occupations (5%). About 25 percent of Latinos worked in service occupations, 23 percent worked in production, transportation, and material moving occupations, 19 percent were in management and professional occupations, 19 percent in sales and office occupations, and 9 percent in construction and maintenance/repair. Native Americans (11%), followed by Latinos (9%) and non-Hispanic Whites (9%), were more likely than African Americans (5%) and Asians (2%) to work in construction, extraction, and maintenance/repair occupations. Latinos (23%), followed by African Americans (20%), were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites (15%), Native Americans (14%), and Asians (12%) to work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. At the level of industry, Latinos were more likely than other population groups to work in extractive (agriculture, fishing and hunting, forestry, and mining) (6%), construction (7%), and non-durable manufacturing industries (7%).

Food Insecurity

In 2010-2012, 13.5 percent (over 0.5 million) of Michigan's 3.8 million households were considered food insecure and 5.3 percent of households (slightly over 200,000 households) were very low food insecure³. Rates of food insecurity in Michigan vary by race/ethnicity. Food insecurity was highest among Latino households (23.6%), followed by African American, non-Hispanic households (20.4%), and Native American households (40.5%), all of which had higher rates than did non-Hispanic White households (11.8%) and Asian/Pacific Islander households (5.3%).

Focus Group Findings—Economic Well-Being

Leaders perceived Latino communities as doing poorly in contexts in which there are very limited resources for service providers and more intense competition for those resources. Participants recognized poverty as a major factor in the lives of Latino families and communities. Poverty impacts education, health, civic engagement, and community well-being. Just as important is the "poverty of information" that pervades the lives of the poor, making it difficult to access the services and programs that could assist them. Latino and Latina seniors spoke of the negative impacts of fixed incomes and the costs of daily lives, sometimes having to decide between food and daily medications. Young adults spoke of the limited opportunities to



obtain good-paying jobs and some spoke of the racial dynamics that prevail at workplaces and the lack of respect paid to them by employers and other employees. Business leaders noted that access to capital remains a barrier for current and aspiring Latino businesspersons.

Health

The general health status of a population has been found to be correlated with specific health problems and serves as a robust predictor of future health status. Using the Current Population Surveys (CPS), merged file 2008-2013 data in our analysis, we find that about 14.8 percent of Michigan adults (18 years and older) reported being in fair or poor health.⁴ As expected, self-assessment of health varies by race/ethnicity. About 9.4 percent of Latinos indicated that they had fair or poor health compared with 13.7 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, 23.9 percent African Americans, 12.5 percent Asians, and 14.4 percent other races. Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data from Michigan from 2012 show higher rates of fair or poor health among Latinos (24.2%) than non-Hispanic Whites (15.1%).

In the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metropolitan area, 15 percent of adults indicated that they had fair or poor health. About 9.2 percent of Latinos in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metropolitan area indicated that they had fair or poor health, compared with 13.3 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, 21.9 percent of African Americans, 13.2 percent of Asians, and 15.9 percent of other races in the same area, respectively.

In 2009-2011, 14.6 percent of Michigan residents (non-elderly) did not have health insurance. Michigan adults are much more likely than children to be uninsured. In 2009-2011, 18.4 percent of adults (19 – 64 years) were uninsured compared to 5.5 percent of children (0 – 18 years). Latinos and African Americans in Michigan were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be uninsured. In 2009-2011, 19.3 percent of Latinos were uninsured, followed by 17.2 percent of African Americans, while 13.7 percent of non-Hispanic Whites were uninsured.

In 2012, 31.1 percent of Michigan adults were considered obese [i.e., their body mass index (BMI) was greater than or equal to 30.0]. African Americans (37.8%), followed closely by Latinos (37.0%), reported higher prevalence of obesity than non-Hispanic Whites (29.9%).

In 2012, 12.3 percent of Michigan adults reported having been told by a doctor that they had cancer (skin or any other type of cancer). Non-Hispanic Whites (13.9%) reported a significant higher prevalence of cancer (of any type) than Latinos (4.8%) and African Americans (6.5%). In 2012, an estimated 9.9

percent of Michigan adults were told that they had some form of cardiovascular disease (i.e., had a heart attack, coronary heart disease, or a stroke). African Americans (12.1%) reported a higher prevalence of cardiovascular disease than non-Hispanic Whites (9.6%) and Latinos (7.3%).

Focus Group Findings—Health

Access to healthcare in general and high risk behaviors (substance misuse and unprotected sex) among teens in particular emerged as critical concerns in the focus groups. Further, undocumented immigrants, because of their status, are least likely to seek medical care for fear of being discovered as undocumented, relying instead on traditional remedies to treat ailments. Decreased funding for social programs that promote access to healthcare opportunities were of concern to many participants, as was the lack of bilingual healthcare providers.

Civic Engagement

Reported Voting and Registration

In Michigan, voter registration and voting behavior patterns tend to mirror those in the nation, except among Latinos. About 78 percent of adult citizens were registered to vote and 67 percent of them indicated they voted in the 2012 presidential elections (Tables 22 and 23). Voting patterns in Michigan differed by race/ethnicity. About 86 percent of Latino citizens reported that they were registered to vote and 70 percent of them reported voting in the 2012 presidential election. In comparison, 80 percent and 68 percent of non-Hispanic Whites; 69 percent and 64 percent of non-Hispanic African Americans; and 59 percent and 52 percent of Asians were registered and voted.

In the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metropolitan area, 78 percent of adult citizens were registered to vote and 69 percent of them indicated that they voted in the 2012 presidential elections (Tables 24 and 25). About 87 percent of Latino citizens reported that they were registered to vote and 76 percent of them actually voted in the 2012 presidential elections. By comparison, 81 percent and 70 percent of non-Hispanic Whites; 72 percent and 67 percent of non-Hispanic African Americans; and 59 percent and 55 percent of Asians were registered and voted, respectively.

Participation in Secondary Organizations

The results show that Latinos in Michigan and in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metro area are less likely than other race/ethnic groups to be involved in community civic activities/organizations. In 2011, about 12 percent of Latinos in Michigan were involved in community civic activities/organizations. By comparison, 40



percent of White, 23 percent of African American, and 22 percent of Asian adults in Michigan were involved in community civic activities/organizations.

Focus Group Findings—Civic Engagement

Participants understood civic engagement as multi-dimensional, ranging from community upkeep to voting. Poor Latinos take pride in the few possessions they have in life, maintaining their homes and working together to clean up and beautify their neighborhoods. Latino leaders articulated representational issues such as lack of Latino leadership in public offices as a concern. In general, Latinos do not participate in organizations in the broader community, with most staying within the orbit of their cultural group, and in many instances, within their neighborhoods.

Community Well Being

In 2012, the arrest rate in Michigan was 3,390 per 100,000 population. About 123 per 100,000 population were arrested for violent crimes and 355 per 100,000 population were arrested for property crimes. In Southeast Michigan, the highest arrest rate was in Wayne County (3,856 per 100,000 population), especially in Detroit (4,821 per 100,000 population), and the lowest arrest rate was in Livingston County with a rate of 1,392 per 100,000 population. In 2012, the crime rate was estimated at 6,037 crimes per 100,000 population. The violent crime rate was estimated at 410 crimes per 100,000 population and property crimes at 2,524 crimes per 100,000 population. The crime rates significantly vary in Southeast Michigan with the highest crime rate being in Wayne County (9,087 per 100,000 population), especially in Detroit (13,594 per 100,000 population), and the lowest crime rate occurring in Livingston County (2,718 per 100,000 population).

Focus Group Findings—Community Well Being

Participants thoughtfully expressed the importance of cultural celebration, family and community well-being as important aspects of Latino culture. They noted the importance of healthy community spaces as vital for their youth and families. Principal concerns among participants with regard to community well-being included poor public transportation, relations with police, crime, and relative lack of community centers and public gathering places for youth. Young adults spoke about peer pressures to engage in high risk behaviors as a problem.

Immigration

In 2010-2012, approximately 23 percent of Latinos in Michigan were foreign-born, compared with six percent of the total population. Nearly 50% of the foreign-born population in Michigan is from Asia.⁵ In Southeast Michigan, 16 percent of Latinos living in St. Clair County were foreign-born, compared with 29 percent of Latinos in Washtenaw County, which had the highest rate. In Detroit, 36 percent of Latinos were foreign-born.

Focus Group Findings—Immigration

Latino immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, lead lives of fear and great difficulties. Collective community agitation and anxiety arise around issues of deportation, exploitation by employers, vulnerability to crime, and uncertain futures. Yet, they weather these obstacles with hope and conviction, pursuing better lives for themselves and their children. They yearn for intelligent and comprehensive immigration reform and the opportunity to lead successful and contributing lives in which they can drive to work or drop off their children at school, free of fear and intimidation, as they seek to support their families and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The futures of Southeast Michigan, Michigan, the Midwest, and the nation are bound up with Latinos and the degree to which they are incorporated into the core institutions of our communities, including education, the economy, health services, and community organizations. The following recommendations are provided as critical guides to improving the well-being of Latino communities in Southeast Michigan and throughout the state. That improvement, however, can only occur by more fully incorporating Latinos into community and societal institutions.

Education

1. Create school resources in different formats in Spanish to reach out to Latino families to promote awareness and understanding of policies, practices, and expectations of local

public school systems.

2. Work with Latino students and their families to engage with college preparedness programs, including information on standardized testing, financial aid, college visitations, application processes, and integration into college environments.
3. Provide after-school curricular activities, including support with homework and tutoring, and engaging parents through adult education programs. This may require transportation assistance for some students.
4. Provide bilingual and bicultural instruction within an integrated educational plan, starting in elementary grades.
5. Provide cultural awareness and competence training to key staff in educational counseling, vocational, and regular education courses.
6. Design and implement programs to increase opportunities for Latino students to take advanced courses in technical and vocational colleges and in four-year universities.
7. Create integrated mentorship programs for both students and their parents together to prevent dropping out of school and to promote educational achievement. For example, partnerships among school, church, and community organizations to deliver educational support programs.

Economic Well-Being

8. Reduce income inequality, which is the most formidable barrier to social interaction and economic development, to allow a true form of local solidarity to grow and generate effective community actions that improve the well-being of residents.
9. Engage local business leaders to develop a Latino economic framework that links business development and community development.
10. Promote the development of Latino business corridors that strengthen firms and their capacity to succeed.
11. Provide one-stop services that support Latino start-up businesses across a range of needs and which increase understanding of the legal and regulatory contexts in which businesses operate.
12. Enhance opportunities for Latino businesses to access capital both at the point of start-up and at the point of expansion.
13. Improve employment opportunities for undocumented Latinos, including driving permits, and provide safeguards against employment exploitation.
14. Promote jobs creation – good jobs that provide steady incomes and livable wages and benefits – so that all residents in Michigan can benefit from improvements in the economy.
15. Provide community educational programs and services to support neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor minority

and other impoverished residents.

16. Promote local leadership programs to develop leaders who can accomplish community development goals that are centered on improving the well-being of Latinos and other residents in Southeast Michigan.



Health and health behaviors

17. Recruit, hire, and retain more bilingual and culturally competent health care providers that at the very least speak Spanish but ideally have knowledge of the cultural and social realities of Latino communities.
18. Provide home health care visits for Latino elderly and disabled persons who are impeded by transportation or mobility issues.
19. Ensure access to affordable quality health care for Latinos.
20. Promote safe and walkable communities where children and elders alike can engage in physical activities.
21. Provide language-appropriate nutrition education in community centers, schools, and in medical offices.
22. Ensure the availability of affordable, healthy foods in the community.
23. Promote community wellness programs with Spanish-speaking health professionals who deliver healthy lifestyle education programs.
24. Provide screening and health literacy services for Latino adults and older adults, especially in the area of mental health among elders.
25. Promote drug and alcohol abuse screening in Spanish and provide referrals as needed.

Civic Engagement

26. Develop partnerships across civic, business and political leaders, groups and organizations to engage residents in the pursuit of community goals.
27. Increase the number of Latinos serving in committees and decision-making activities of community and service

organizations.

28. Collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to improve and strengthen positive police/community relations and improve response times to poor communities.

29. Follow recent Presidential Executive Actions (EA) to demarcate local police from ICE. Follow recent EA to rid local law enforcement of secure community programs that link local law enforcement with immigration.

30. Use pre-existing gathering spaces (churches, soccer, and cultural festivals) to promote awareness of community needs and pathways to engage civically.

31. Encourage Latinos to exercise their voting rights and participate in local, state, and national elections.

32. Promote Latino involvement in and linkages to community networks of local groups and services to express their interests and concerns in order to get their specific needs addressed.

33. Design and implement interventions to enhance multicultural capacity among formal institutions in communities (i.e., schools, community centers, city planners, etc.) to better serve Spanish-speaking Latinos.

Community Well-Being

34. Improve police/community relations, police response times, and the respect shown to residents by police officers.

35. Engage local law enforcement agencies with small sections of neighborhoods to develop neighborhood watch programs that promote public safety and security.

36. Promote community discussions of the school-to-prison pipeline to increase awareness of the punitive model of criminal justice that pervades communities and negatively impacts Latino youth.

37. Make available to the public official statistics by standard categories of race/ethnicity, particularly with regard to the incarceration of juveniles and adults.

38. Recruit more local Latino leaders for political office, for police positions, and for educational employment (teachers, school administrators, etc.)

39. Develop community economic development plans that ensure the security of residents and improve access to essential services,

40. Foster a safe climate for Latinos to participate in community activities without fear of hostility.

41. Incorporate the needs of Latinos in the priorities to be addressed and discussed by service delivery organizations.

Immigration

42. Enhance key aspects of immigrant integration (health,



employment, safety, and education) through partnerships with existing community-based organizations to better address the needs of Latino immigrants and organize plans for effective intervention (i.e. toolkits for sharing information and resources within Latino communities).

43. Provide driving permits to undocumented immigrants so that they are able to drive to work and continue contributing to the local economy.

44. Adopt and implement DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) policies that allow undocumented youth who obtained a diploma from a Michigan high school to enroll in and pay in-state tuition rates at Michigan's public colleges and universities.

45. Promote immigrant-friendly communities by engaging local business, police, and education leaders in educating the public on critical immigration issues.

46. Provide community workshops or venues that facilitate community integration and interaction.

47. Enhance access to legal counseling and family services for Latino immigrants. 

Endnotes:

¹ That is, the percentage of 16- to 24-year old civilians living in housing units or non-institutionalized group quarters who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school diploma or equivalency such a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

² The percentage of public high school students who, after beginning the ninth grade four years ago, dropped out of school.

³ Very low food insecurity is defined as ... "the food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times because the household lacked money and other sources for food" (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, and Singh, 2013: vi).

⁴ The categories used for self-reported health are: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor.

⁵ See *State Immigration Data Profiles*, Migration Policy Institute available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state-demographics/MI>.

Neoliberalism Confronts Latinos

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Despite questionable results, the privatization of immigration enforcement has expanded to unprecedented sectors. In the next section, I discuss the neoliberal tenet of efficiency and apply this concept to deportability and deportation issues.

Market and Government Efficiency

Efficiency, a tenet of neoliberalism, has become an important indicator of success for deportations and workplace raids. As a result, the act of deportation seeks success in becoming more “efficient.” Under President Barack Obama, DHS has deported more immigrants than any other presidency in American history. At the same time, deportability increases the efficiency of undocumented immigrant labor costs in the United States. The tenet of efficiency also influences the unprecedented speeds at which the government tries and deports undocumented immigrants. The following discussion investigates the influence of efficiency in the deportability and deportation of undocumented immigrants.

Deportability and Deportation

The neoliberal immigration paradigm requires the exploitation of labor to increase profits during periods of economic expansion. Immigrant labor functions as a release valve during economic contractions, as deportation cushions the severity of an economic downturn. Exploitation is possible because immigrants are vulnerable to deportation and constitute a “flexible labor force” that mitigates the negative impact of economic downturns. This section discusses deportability: a status susceptible to the constant threat of deportation resulting in economic and legal vulnerability.

Deportability provides a situation where the government deports some immigrants while most undocumented immigrants remain in the country and and continue to provide low-cost



labor. Deportability turns undocumented immigrants into fugitives, whose legal vulnerability is indefinite and whose fear of deportation creates a politically subdued and cost effective labor force, unprotected by labor laws. As undocumented immigrants live outside U.S. labor regulations, profits among employers who hire them increase as business-related costs such as safety, pensions, and administration decrease, if they are not eliminated altogether. By employing an undocumented, politically marginalized workforce, American business owners follow a main tenet of cost efficiency, increasing profits by decreasing the cost of labor, and thereby the costs of production.

Public shows of immigration enforcement intensify the power of deportability, especially the increase in deportations under the Bush H., Bush W., and Obama administrations. Making large spectacles of immigration enforcement activities, like raids, police checkpoints, and detentions, the Federal Government addresses the “problem” of immigration and keeps undocumented immigrants deportable.

Between 1992 and 1997, the Federal Government deported approximately 2.1 million undocumented immigrants. In FY 2010, President Barack Obama deported about one fourth of that number (392,862). In FY 2013, his administration deported 368,644, a ten percent decrease from 2012. At this rate, President Obama could reach two million deportations during his two terms as president. George W. Bush’s administration advertised raids as organized pursuits of dangerous criminals, but only nine percent of those detained in raids during 2007 were actually felons or criminals. Between 2003 and 2008, seventy-five percent of the 96,000 undocumented immigrants apprehended in immigration raids were not criminals. This cost 675 million dollars. Bush’s administration also oversaw large-scale workplace raids that captured and deported undocumented workers between 2007 and 2008, costing approximately ten million dollars. The Obama administration has detained approximately 130,000 undocumented immigrants in smaller raids at carwashes and convenience stores. Thirty thousand of these detainees had either committed misdemeanors or had no criminal history. The neoliberal principle of efficiency has increased the obscurity of immigration practices and the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants at the hands of the Federal Government.

The Dark Side of Neoliberal Principles: Abuse, Detention, and Death

The systematic violation of human rights is the litmus test of the moral legitimacy of any state. The United States has a history of denouncing states that violate human rights while

overlooking its' own responsibility in securing the human rights of undocumented immigrants. The United States' broken immigration system puts undocumented immigrants in danger by forcing them to cross a dangerous desert. Moreover, the United States cannot secure the safety of immigrants inside detention centers. It is a failure of United States immigration policy that forces undocumented immigrants to risk their lives in search of employment.

Death at the Border

The United States Border Patrol began stopping the passage of Chinese laborers from México into the U.S. in 1904. Since then, the Border Patrol has increased substantially in size, and in recent decades the crossing of immigrants from México through the desert has become increasingly fatal. In 1994, one of the main goals of Operation Gatekeeper was to decrease undocumented immigration by placing border checkpoints farther east of San Diego toward the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico. The government reasoned the increased danger of crossing a desert would discourage unauthorized migration. The danger indeed increased, but immigrants were no less discouraged. Immigrants are raped, robbed, and/or kidnapped along the border. Many also die in the process.

In Arizona alone, approximately two thousand people died crossing the border between 2001 and 2009. Deaths along the border increased 27 percent in 2012, totaling about 5,500, since 1998. The majority of these deaths occurred from exposure to the intense desert heat and cold. These deaths are justified by anti-immigrant advocates as due to personal irresponsibility. Aside from the obvious violations of immigrants' 4th and 14th amendment rights, the United States' actions willfully endanger immigrants, a direct violation of Article 1 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which the U.S. is a signatory. The United States violates the inalienable human rights of immigrants when it intentionally increases the danger of crossing a border to reduce migration.

Broken Promises of the Neoliberal Immigration Paradigm

The most popular argument in favor of neoliberalism is that it increases efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness by streamlining resource distribution. However, the immigration system has failed in these respects. The 18 billion dollars the Federal Government spent on border enforcement in FY 2012 was more than the U.S. spent on other law enforcement agencies combined. Yet, the government estimates only 40 to 55 percent of all border crossers are actually apprehended and only about 34,000 detainees are in custody at any time. Each



Photo Courtesy of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

detainee costs between 95 and 200 dollars per day, at an annual cost to taxpayers of 1.7 to 2 billion dollars per year. Given the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States, these statistics show the very small returns on such a large investment in immigration enforcement. If we understand efficiency as cost effective changes leading to large returns, these detention and militarization costs are not an efficient use of government resources (public funds) or attention. It has become clearer over time that these measures have not deterred immigrants from crossing the border.

Second, the immigration system has become more opaque. Instead of streamlining the detention system, private detention companies have cornered this market, leading to less transparency and accountability. One example of this decreased transparency is the lack of official information and statistics on the exact number of facilities that detain immigrants. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) website has a list of 84 possible detention facilities. In addition, DHS rents beds from prisons and jails. In 2007, a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request uncovered an updated list of 340 facilities where immigrants could be detained, but it excludes criminal and minor detention facilities from its list.

Third, the immigration system has become less effective. In 2013, the U.S. immigration system detained 400,000 immigrants, many in solitary confinement. A 2014 Human Rights Watch Report showed many detainees had minor or no criminal histories and substantial personal ties to the United States. Moreover, eight years after the Secure Fence Act of 2006, Mexican drug cartels build transport tunnels across the border, demonstrating that the fence cannot stop those determined to circumvent it. Further, the problem has intensified as 125

federal employees have been convicted of participating in drug smuggling and human trafficking activities between 2005 and 2011.

Finally, neoliberalism's ultimate inefficiency in the area of immigration is the alarming number of American citizens mistakenly detained and deported. The government insists each case is isolated, but the Associated Press has documented fifty-five cases of citizens detained by ICE and scholars have found at least 160 citizens who were deported. In 2007, Pedro Guzman, a developmentally disabled man was deported to Tijuana with three dollars in his pocket. After three months of surviving by eating from garbage cans and bathing in canals, Gomez was found. ICE claims this is the only case of a citizen having been deported, but it also mistakenly deported citizens Mark Lyttle in 2009, Antonio Montejano in 2011, and Jakadrien Turner in 2012. The Federal Government deported American citizens George Ibarra and Blanca Maria Alfaro two times, each. Sigifredo Saldana Iracheta, a 49-year-old laborer from South Texas, was deported four separate times over the span of two decades. Neoliberal principles have not decreased the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of the immigration system. Instead, it has made the federal immigration system more expensive and less effective.

Neoliberal Influence of Obama's Immigration Reform Policy

President Barack Obama's second administration began with an announcement that it would be pushing forward with the White House's "Blueprint For Immigration Reform." However, the President's immigration reform pillars only exemplify how neoliberal principles have become infused in immigration policies, practices, and goals.

In its May 2011 report "Building a 21st Century Immigration System," the Obama administration touted its use of unprecedented resources to secure the border, while stressing the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of "interior and worksite enforcement," and improve the "legal immigration system." The reform, however, continues the privatization of immigration services and increases the personal responsibility costs to undocumented immigrants. The neoliberal paradigm has shifted the justification of immigration reform from a moral duty to an economic benefit. Immigration reform is now a means to achieve this goal. Lastly, this paradigm affects the discussions and debates about immigration reform.

The administration's report also shows the extent to which immigration control has become an economic benefit rather than a normative requirement. The report justifies the acceptance of immigrants to the United States as "imperative" for economic



success, with immigrants creating jobs, increasing economic competitiveness, and contributing to the country through taxes. These justifications are always qualified and couched within a reassurance that immigrants will be held personally responsible for their actions as undocumented workers and "illegal" residents. To adjust their status undocumented immigrants will be required to register with the government, submit to rigorous security checks and verification of eligibility, pay registration fees, fines, and back taxes, wait eight years, and wait behind applicants waiting outside of the country to receive their visas. Undocumented immigrants would also face more penalties for using fraudulent Social Security cards, and be subject to biometric security provisions in the future.

Businesses employing undocumented workers are also to be held responsible, but their penalties consist of fines and employers are given help to strengthen their businesses. The plan requires large businesses, those with more than 1,000 employees, to enroll in E-Verify. E-Verify is an internet-based program for employers to verify worker employment eligibility after hiring. The plan also provides a "safe harbor" for employers who employ undocumented workers inaccurately confirmed by E-Verify as authorized to work.

This blueprint also exemplifies how the neoliberal immigration paradigm dictates immigration policy. The goal of immigration policy, according to President Obama, is to assist in business growth and an immigrant's purpose is to help the United States economy. Second, the government castigates undocumented immigrants for their transgressions, but gives leniency and assistance to businesses.

The principles of privatization, efficiency, and personal responsibility fundamentally changed the Federal Government's approach in its operation of our immigration system. The recent

privatization of detention and border militarization have increased the cost of the immigration system as well as its inoperability and unreliability. Increasing the efficiency of the immigration system has led to the highest number of deportations by any president and keeps millions of undocumented immigrants vulnerable to deportability and abuse. The neoliberal principle of personal responsibility justifies the raids, abuses, and deaths of undocumented immigrants.

Latinos are especially concerned about these outcomes as they are more likely to bear the costs of immigration policy change. Further, Latinos use immigration policy as a tool to measure political representation while comprising the largest

number of undocumented immigrants, detainees, and deportees. The discourse of neoliberalism and its principles have hindered the progress of humane comprehensive immigration reform. A humanitarian discourse provides a better framework for necessary changes, but the entrenchment of neoliberal discourse will make this difficult. Thus, it is imperative that we make its failures transparent and public. 🌐

Endnotes.

* *Andrea Silva is a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Riverside, where she is specializing on immigration policy.*

MI Latino/a Business Statewide Summit 2015

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With a purchasing power of over \$1.5 trillion, Latinos contribute significantly to the economy of the United States. This economic factor has contributed to the development of several industries and has created opportunities for new businesses. According to Chris Peterson, Director, Product Center at Michigan State University, Hacienda Mexican Foods in Detroit is a prime example of Latina business success through market adaptation and expansion, with 20% growth in grocery products since 2009.

John Melcher, Associate Director of the Center for Community and Economic Development at Michigan State University, described the Latino Entrepreneurial Development Initiative (LEDI), a collaborative effort with the Julian Samora Research Institute. Jorge González, Executive Director of West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Camilo Suero, Executive Director, Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce provided figures on the growing Hispanic-owned businesses in the state of Michigan and throughout the U.S. According to the figures there are over 2.6 million Hispanic American-owned firms in the U.S. Ken Szymusiak, Managing Director, Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation at the Michigan State University Broad College of Business, and Sean Gray Lewis, Director Business Support Services Goldman Sachs, 10,000 Small Businesses Wayne State University, spoke on the importance of innovative approaches for growing Latino/a businesses.

Roger Somerville, Assistant Director, Procurement, Michigan State University and Mario Hernández, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer from the Latino Economic Development Center of Minnesota addressed the attendees during lunch. Somerville provided information on doing business with MSU. Hernandez, the keynote speaker, described the philosophy and approach



of the Latino Economic Development Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The values underlying Latino business development are community development and social justice. The Center has been enormously successful at promoting Latino/a business development by partnering with other economic development agencies and providing services to start-up and existing Latino business start-ups.

Raúl Soto, Chief Diversity Officer of the Rush Group, and Armando Ojeda, President & CEO of Cadena, Inc., provided insights on preparing for contracting with large firms. Carlos Sánchez, Director, Latino Business and Economic Development Center at Ferris State University focused his talk on building ties across business communities for maximum impact and output. Closing the event was Roberto Torres, Executive Director, Hispanic Center of Western Michigan. Among other things, Torres provided details on the Supporting Our Leaders (SOL) Program at the Center that has contributed significantly in addressing dropout rates of Latino youths. In a community that is battling a 56% dropout (or push-out) rate, the youth that participate in SOL have a graduation rate of 95%.

Dr. Martinez made concluding remarks and reiterated the importance of viewing Latino community empowerment through Latino/a business development. 🌐

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