

Promoting Latino and African American Collaboration through Dialogue and Engagement

Hosted by
The Julian Samora Research Institute
and
African American and African Studies
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI



**A Summary Report of the
Black-Brown Dialogues Summit:
Working toward Common Ground
November 13, 2017**

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UNIVERSITY

University Outreach
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Julian Samora Research Institute

The Julian Samora Research Institute is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in Michigan, the Midwest, and the nation.



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Preface

In the face of a 2016 presidential campaign fueled by racial resentment, along with the regressive policies of the current White House administration, the times call for a renewed commitment to Black/Brown dialogues. Historically, Black/Brown coalitions have been organized to elect Black and Brown leaders, and to combat school segregation, police brutality, “urban renewal” and gentrification, environmental racism, and other social injustices. These alliances have often been temporary though, mobilized to address specific grievances and then fading out when success is achieved or enthusiasm is lost. As such, the task for those interested in ongoing Black/Brown dialogues and cooperation is to identify barriers to lasting collaboration and find ways to overcome them so that African Americans and Latinos are able to develop effective working relationships that empower them to have greater political influence in the policy directions of the state and the operation of its institutions.

Grant Nieva and Pulido (2014) suggest that two approaches to understanding Black/Brown relations—collaboration and competition models—dominate within the growing literature on the subject. Researchers working within the collaboration model often focus on examining when and how Black/Brown coalitions are built and mobilized to address shared economic and political concerns, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of these coalitions in order to provide models for contemporary and future collaborations. Researchers working within the competition model contend that relationships between African Americans and Latinos are often defined through competition for jobs, political representation, and limited material resources. Some researchers working from this approach also argue that African Americans are sometimes hesitant to build coalitions with Latinos because they wish to protect political and economic gains, whereas some Latinos are reluctant to ally with African Americans out of anti-Black racism.

Grant Nieva and Pulido further identify a body of literature that emphasizes the importance of examining Black/Brown relations in terms of the stereotypes and attitudes African Americans and Latinos hold toward each other. This research shows that many African Americans believe that Latino immigration threatens their social, political, and economic standing, and worry that immigration issues will supersede their ongoing struggle for civil rights. Latinos, on the other hand, often hold multiple negative stereotypes of African Americans, including stereotypes about criminality, intelligence, trustworthiness, and work ethic. Grant Nieva and Pulido argue, though, that much of this research treats Black/Brown relationships as either positive or negative, whereas in actuality Black/Brown relationships exist on a spectrum and are “constructed, challenged, and negotiated” through dynamic processes (2014, p. 90).

Yamamoto and Jenssen (2017) note that research on interracial conflict often proposes coalition-building strategies that focus on identifying “common ground” on social, political, and economic issues shared by communities of color. They argue, however, that common ground approaches to interracial group conflict are often initially useful to address a specific issue, but are ultimately limited by the fact that they tend to overlook deeper grievances between groups. Yamamoto and Jenssen contend that addressing “color-on-color” grievances requires context-specific recognition of intergroup power dynamics, and they provide a model for examining these dynamics.

Their model is built on two concepts: simultaneity and differentiation. Simultaneity de-

scribes a situation in which one group is simultaneously oppressed and a partial oppressor. This occurs, for instance, when an oppressed group gains some limited degree of power and in turn redeploys oppressive strategies against another less powerful group, or when a racial group aligns itself with others in such a way as to increase its relative power over another group. Simultaneity thus acknowledges group power dynamics as multidimensional and changeable. Differentiation is concerned with examining how distinct histories of oppression and struggles for liberation, along with varying social and economic challenges in the present confer “differing levels and types of power” to different racial groups (Yamamoto & Jenssen, 2017, p. 33). Yamamoto and Jenssen contend that recognizing differential power between subjugated racial groups enables processes of accountability when one racial group exercises power, however limited, in ways that harm other groups, and creates opportunities for intergroup empathy. They suggest that such an analysis of underlying intergroup grievances can then be translated into “ground-level practice for longer term alliance forging and broader social healing” (*ibid.*, p. 19).

Moving forward, the Black-Brown Dialogues Summit held on November 13, 2017 in East Lansing, Michigan set in motion a process that recognizes the importance of both intergroup dynamics between the two groups, and builds on the commonalities of their histories in the face of the policies and practices of America’s systems of racism. The aim is to generate a unifying vision that goes beyond temporary coalitions and alliances to sustainable collaborative relations that reconfigure intergroup power relations in pursuit of a more inclusive, equitable and just social order. We must always keep in mind that this is our country too!

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Executive Summary

Over 80 summit participants identified and ranked the following ten issues as key challenges for African Americans and Latinos in Michigan and provided initial suggestions for addressing them.

Education – Strong educational opportunities are key pathways to individual development and socialization for effective participation in society. Improving educational opportunities for African American and Latino students requires equitable funding, culturally competent teachers and administrators, and a curriculum and school staff that is representative of the student population.

Healthcare/Mental Health – Social determinants such as racism, implicit bias, lack of care providers who reflect the communities they serve, and lack of broad health education programming contribute to inequitable health and mental health care for African American and Latino communities. Economic determinants such as high costs of healthcare and lack of access to resources are also contributing factors.

Cross-Cultural Communication/Collaboration – Improving relations between African American and Latino communities will increase collective social and political power. This will require change at the interpersonal, community, and institutional levels.

Community Empowerment/Economic Development – Empowering African American and Latino communities on the economic plane requires increased financial literacy, acquisition and management of wealth, and increased access to capital and business networks for entrepreneurial persons of color.

Civic Engagement/Political Clout – Working together leads to greater political representation for African American and Latino communities. Increasing the voting power of African Americans and Latinos involves voter registration drives, voter education campaigns, encouraging immigrants with permanent residency to become citizens in order to vote, and using African American and Latino media to spread the message.

Voter Suppression – Voter ID laws, gerrymandering, and voter intimidation are employed to limit the electoral influence of African American and Latino communities. Increasing African American and Latino political power requires eliminating these and other barriers to voting.

Criminal Justice Reform – Positive reform of the criminal justice system requires moving from a punitive to a rehabilitative framework, decreasing rates of youth incarceration, increasing oversight of Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, greater representation of African Americans and Latinos on police forces and in the courts and correctional facilities, and an end to the privatization of prisons. Improving the delivery of social services to African American and Latino communities, including increased access to education, mental healthcare and economic opportunities, are necessary to reduce the pipeline into the criminal justice system.

Anti-Blackness – Addressing and alleviating anti-Blackness is necessary to building coalitions. This requires increasing social interactions between African American and Latino communities,

as well as greater awareness and more equitable and salient portrayals of our histories. It also requires addressing anti-Blackness in the form of skin privilege within African American and Latino communities; lighter complexions and “European” traits are given greater preference in both communities.

Trauma/Historical Crimes against Humanity – Empowerment of African Americans and Latinos requires confronting the historical violence and traumas of slavery and colonialism. This requires knowing and telling our own histories and validating our social suffering through stories of shared lived experiences, as well as defining our unique relationship to the United States and using U.S. law to highlight institutional biases regarding our treatment.

Immigration – Immigration reform remains a pressing issue for Latino communities, but it is a societal problem; acknowledging the diversity of those negatively affected by immigration policy increases solidarity between African American and Latino communities. Grassroots organizing efforts should push for comprehensive immigration reform, restructuring of immigrant detention centers, and an accessible and updated process for applying for residency status.

Introduction

Latinos and African Americans represent the two largest ethno-racial minority groups in the State of Michigan and in the nation. Working collaboratively, these two population segments could wield significantly more political power and influence in the state, but a number of barriers exist that prevent that from occurring. Most importantly, Latinos and African Americans are often pitted against each other in competition for scarce resources, perpetuating needless divisions in order to maintain the existing power structure. The current political climate across the nation and in Michigan highlights the need for increased understanding and collaboration between these two groups, especially in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections.

The Julian Samora Research Institute and the Department of African American and African Studies at Michigan State University hosted the *Black-Brown Dialogues Summit: Working toward Common Ground* on November 13, 2017. The event brought together community leaders, non-profit leaders, scholars, and students to engage in a constructive dialogue on the unique histories and social contexts of African American and Latino communities and the barriers that prevent effective collaboration on common challenges facing these two communities. Participants identified common issues these communities can address together, as well as the steps to take together in pursuit of a better Michigan for all.

Laying the Groundwork

Dr. Rubén Martínez, Director of the Julian Samora Research Institute, opened the Summit and introduced the Associate Provost of University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University, Hiram Fitzgerald, who welcomed participants. Dr. Fitzgerald noted that full incorporation of African Americans, Latinos, and other minorities into U.S. society is a necessary but challenging goal, and that the dialogues set in motion during the day would give perspective and voice to the vision for a better Michigan and better America as we navigate through today's politically tumultuous moment. He stated that truth, healing, and racial transformation are possible, and will ensure that all people are created equal and remain so throughout life.

Dr. Martínez pointed out that the Summit was a first step toward intergroup collaboration that would ultimately include Native Americans, Asian Americans, American Muslims and other ethno-racial minority groups. He then highlighted the different histories of African Americans and Latinos in the United States, as well as points of convergence. He also provided a demographic overview of the challenges faced by African Americans and Latinos.

Distinct Histories and Points of Convergence

African Americans and Latinos have distinctive but not always divergent histories; both groups live within the orbit of the same system of domination, but with different points of entry. Latinos initially entered American society through conquest. In the years after 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded the northern half of Mexico to the United States, the new citizens, Mexican Americans, were forced to live under martial law for a number of years. They were displaced from their lands and forced to enter a system of wage labor characterized by a racial division of labor. Today, the proximity of the border with Mexico ensures transborder kinship ties and continual immigration, which is demanded by American employers seeking ac-

cess to low-wage workers. African Americans entered American society through kidnappings in Africa followed by enslavement, and their history is marked by the legacies of Slave Codes, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Black Codes, and Jim Crow segregation.

At the same time, however, both groups have confronted the racial division of labor, *de jure* and *de facto* segregation, and a history of violence and lynching—thousands for African Americans and hundreds for Latinos, but even one is too many. African Americans and Latinos also share a history of struggles for civil rights. Their struggles have overlapped in the courts for decades. Leaders of these groups collaborated in the 1960s and were both represented at the Poor People’s March of 1968. Latino civil rights leaders have collaborated with Native American social struggles as well. African Americans and Latinos are also intertwined in terms of policy, and have unknowingly supported each other through the internal logic of precedence in case law. Today, both groups are subject to the ideology, policies and practices of the neoliberal order.

Demographic Profile:

According to 2016 Census Bureau estimates, White Americans accounted for 61.3% of the U.S. population, while Latinos accounted for 17.8% and African Americans for 12.4%. White Americans are an aging population, with a median age of 43.1 years in 2014, compared to 33.4 years for African Americans and 28.4 for Latinos.

Poverty remains a pressing issue for African Americans and Latinos. The 2016 estimated family poverty rate was 20.0% for African Americans and 18.6% for Latinos, compared to 6.4% for White Americans. Likewise, the estimated child poverty rate was 25.5% for African Americans and 22.1% for Latinos, compared to 10.5% for White Americans, and the family poverty rate for female-headed households was 32.6% for African Americans and 35.7% for Latinos, compared to 21.1% for White Americans.

African Americans and Latinos also lag in educational attainment, with only 15.3% of Latinos and 20.9% of African Americans in 2016 having a college degree or higher, compared to 35.0% of White Americans. Further, 32.9% of Latinos and 14.8% of African Americans have less than a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to only 7.5% of White Americans. In 2015, African American students had an average 12th grade reading scale score of 266 out of 500, Latinos 276, and White Americans 295. African American and Latino students also trailed in 12th grade math scores, with African American students scoring an average of 130 out of 500 and Latinos 139, compared to 160 for White Americans.

Implications:

These patterns ripple through the lives of individuals, communities, and the nation. Along with other factors, they will have major negative consequences for the nation, particularly given today’s regressive political climate. Dr. Martinez thus proposed that the task of summit participants was to envision collaborative steps that Latinos and African Americans can take in key life areas to shape a better Michigan and a better United States, stating that what we have now clearly is not good enough. The richest nation in the world is structured to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and ethno-racial minorities continue to have limited life chances because of it.

“The Importance of Black Brown Partnerships”

Reverend Alvin Herring, Director of Racial Equity and Community Engagement at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Refugio “Cuco” Rodriguez, Program Officer, delivered the first of three invited speeches during the day. Rev. Herring and Rodriguez opened by sharing personal stories of the struggles their families endured; Rodriguez spoke of his grandfather, a migrant laborer who traveled from place to place in the back of a truck to support the family, and Rev. Herring spoke of his mother’s experiences growing up in the segregated South. Using the Ghanaian concept of “Sankofa,” meaning “go back and get it,” they proposed that it is necessary to understand and reflect on the past in order to build a better future.

They further suggested that the shared history of African Americans and Latinos is one of forced competition for limited resources. Mathematically, in some areas of the country Black and Brown communities should be running city and county government, but the practice of being played against each other results in an inability to trust one another. To overcome this divisive practice they proposed a healing process that begins with truth-telling and a moment of shared public lament that fosters forgiveness and accountability. To illustrate this process, they offered the Zulu expression, “sawubona,” which translates as “I see you,” and its response, “ngikhona,” or “I am here,” as well as the Mayan greeting, “In Lak’ech, Ala K’in,” which means “I am the other you, you are the other me.”

“Opportunities for Brown/Black Synergies”

Armando Ojeda, President and CEO of Cadena, Inc., presented the second address. He stressed the importance of African American and Latino communities not just coming together, but actually connecting and collaborating. He proposed “disruptive innovation,” or “innovation that creates something with a value network that eventually disrupts and displaces established organizations, norms and alliances,” as the catalyst for bringing about more equitable social and economic relations.

Ojeda offered a call to action for Black/Brown collaboration, beginning with establishing a set of standards and measures to assess where we are, using previous successful collaborations as a benchmark to assess the current status of collaborations and to set goals. He also called for a small, diverse team of active, influential leaders to provide leadership, and stressed being clear on priorities, and suggested taking an inventory of community resources, including taking advantage of think tanks and research centers such as JSRI. He further suggested developing a constituent database and relevant messaging, and using social media to build visibility.

“Challenges & Opportunities for Black and Brown Unity, the Way Forward”

During lunch, Cook County Commissioner Jesus “Chuy” Garcia delivered the keynote address. Garcia began by emphasizing the historical significance of the election of Harold Washington as Mayor of Chicago in 1983. Washington’s mayoral run represented a resistance to the emergence of austerity politics and a movement for greater representation of Black and Brown communities in Chicago city politics. His election dealt a serious blow to the mostly White male Democratic Party machine and the corruption within it. Elected on a reform agenda, Washington’s cabinet was the most diverse in Chicago history, and he ensured the election of four Latinos

to City Council (including Garcia) and nineteen African Americans to elected office. He pushed for an equitable distribution of City resources and created feelings of self-determination in African American and Latino communities. He was also the first mayor in U.S. history to declare a sanctuary city.

Garcia noted that presently Chicago remains one of the most segregated cities in the country, pointing to educational and economic inequalities, as well as community violence in African American and Latino neighborhoods. He stated that African Americans and Latinos, who together represent almost 65% of the city's population, could wield real political power if the two communities worked together. He spoke of current efforts to build coalitions, including the Latino Policy Forum, an organization that facilitates Latino involvement in public decision-making, and which has a board that is 50% Latino and 50% African American, as well as other groups taking on issues affecting Black and Brown communities, such as immigration and police violence. He also pointed to workers' centers that are exposing discrimination against and exploitation of Black and Brown workers.

Speaking of his own mayoral campaign in 2015 against incumbent Rahm Emanuel, he noted that although he did not win the election, his campaign demonstrated the possibilities of Black and Brown coalitions. For instance, his campaign forced the first run-off election in Chicago history, and the election also saw 18 run-offs for City Council seats. There were also a record eight televised debates between mayoral candidates. Further, his campaign helped lay the basis for ongoing multi-ethnic and interfaith coalitions.

Garcia suggested that Black/Brown coalitions in the coming years should focus on several issues. These include: identifying new sources of funding; criminal justice reform, including eliminating bail; greater police accountability; equitable funding for schools; a progressive income tax; protecting the Affordable Care Act; and the Fight for 15, which calls for a minimum wage of \$15 an hour. He also identified a number of barriers to successful coalitions. These include: government contracts given visibility in order to cause infighting between Black and Brown communities; picking leaders who keep quiet on issues; Latino population growth and its potential impacts on African American communities; language barriers; and fatigue caused by the current federal administration's policies and communications.

In parting, Garcia implored those in attendance to remember that there are larger forces shaping the circumstances of Black and Brown communities and their ability to work together. In particular, he noted that African Americans are not the ones who disinvested in their communities; rather, it was conservative government policies and market forces that drove disinvestment. He further stated that immigrants don't control the economy, businesses, or government, but that many are in fact economic and political refugees. Finally, he stressed the importance of civic engagement in creating policy change, and in particular the importance of engaging young people in the political process.

The Summit Process

The summit was designed as a deliberative process to facilitate constructive dialogues among participants throughout the event. This was accomplished by facilitating two general working sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with "reporters" from each small group

discussion presenting their results to the plenary group.

The morning session was organized into small working groups, each with the same task: identify and agree upon the top five issues facing African Americans and Latinos in Michigan. As the reports were made a list was developed on large sheets of paper and displayed for all to view. Participants then prioritized the issues by voting for the ones they believed were most important. The ten issues with the most votes were presented to the full group in rank order based on the number of dots received.

The following are the top ten topical issues that were identified by summit participants presented in rank order:

1. Education
2. Healthcare/Mental Healthcare
3. Cross-cultural Communication/Collaboration
4. Community Economic Development and Empowerment
5. Civic Engagement/Political Clout
6. Voter Suppression
7. Criminal Justice Reform
8. Anti-Blackness
9. Trauma/Historical Crimes against Humanity
10. Immigration

Each topic is presented and discussed in this report. Each issue is introduced by a brief description of the current context within their respective societal arena.

Top Ten Issues

1) Education

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2016 an estimated 75% of African Americans and 76% of Latinos in Michigan over the age of 25 had less than a college degree, compared to 61% for White Americans; 15% of African Americans and 28% of Latinos had less than a high school degree, compared to 8% for White Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a, U.S. Census Bureau, 2016b, U.S. Census Bureau, 2016c). Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) data for 2015 show African American students having the lowest proficiency scores in all subjects at all grade levels, with Latino students the second lowest in all subjects at all grade levels, while White students were second only to Asian students in all subjects at all grade levels (Michigan Department of Education, 2016). For the 2014-2015 school year, African American students in Michigan had a graduation rate of 67% and Latino students 72%, compared to 84% for White students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Education was clearly the top priority for summit participants. In addition to receiving the highest number of votes, nearly every working group in the morning session identified education as a priority issue.

The following dimensions of education were seen as critical issues that must be addressed:

- Achievement/opportunity gaps between African American and Latino students and White peers;
- Underfunded/under-resourced schools;
- Need for culturally competent staff and/or bicultural/bilingual educators/staff that are representative of student populations;
- Need for inclusive/representative curricula;
- Accessibility and costs associated with high achievement (e.g., standardized test preparation);
- School-to-prison pipeline; and
- Alternatives to traditional education/established educational systems.

2) Healthcare/Mental Healthcare

According to the 2016 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report, out of 20 measures of access to healthcare, African Americans fared worse than White Americans on 10 measures and the same on 10 measures, while Latinos fared worse than White Americans on 15 measures, the same on 3 measures, and better on 2 (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2017). In terms of quality of care, African Americans fared worse than White Americans on 77 out of 182 measures, the same on 82, and better on 23, while Latinos fared worse than White Americans on 65 measures, the same on 66, and better on 37. A 2016 report from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation shows that out of 29 measures of health status and outcomes, African Americans fared worse than White Americans on 24 measures, the same on 4, and better on 1, while Latinos fared worse on 13, the same on 5, and better on 7 (there were data limitations for 4 measures) (Argita, Foutz, Cornachione, & Garfied, 2016).

Summit participants identified the following dimensions of healthcare and mental healthcare that require improvement:

- Accessibility and affordability of care;
- Lack of knowledge of available services;
- Access to healthier lifestyles and healthy foods (food deserts);
- Improved assessments of mental health;
- Implicit bias in care; and
- Cultural competence of healthcare workers.

3) Cross-cultural Communication/Collaboration

Summit participants demonstrated a belief that improved cross-cultural communication is necessary to advance collaboration between African Americans and Latinos. They identified several barriers to cross-cultural communication and collaboration, including:

- Intergroup discrimination;
- Fighting for the same sources of funding instead of working together;
- Focus on differences instead of similarities; and
- Generational gaps.

They also identified several steps critical to improving cross-cultural communication, including:

- Truth-telling and trust building;
- Top-down collaboration; and
- Improved sharing of resources.

4) Community Economic Development and Empowerment

According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the median adjusted household income for African Americans in Michigan was \$29,678, for Latinos it was \$39,571, and for White Americans it was \$52,937 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). Nationally, White Americans had a median net worth 13 times greater than that of African Americans and 10 times greater than that of Latinos (Pew Research Center, 2016). Further, 26% of African Americans and 24% of Latinos lived below the poverty line, compared to 10% for White Americans. The national annual average unemployment rate for African Americans in 2016 was 8.4%, for Latinos it was 5.8%, and for White Americans it was 4.3% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The 2011-2015 American Community Survey estimates that 45% of African Americans and 60% of Latinos in Michigan lived in owner occupied housing, compared to 79% of White Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015c).

Data from the 2012 Economic Census indicate that 81.6% of businesses in Michigan were White-owned, 12.8% were African American-owned, and 2.4% were Latino-owned (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). Only 2.6% of Black-owned and 9.4% of Latino-owned businesses had paid employees, compared to 20.7% for White-owned businesses.

Summit participants identified the following dimensions as important to community economic development and empowerment:

- Investing in local economies;
- Access to goods;
- Business networking;
- Career opportunities/gainful employment;

- Debt acquisition and management;
- Disinvestment and gentrification;
- A living wage; and
- Wealth accumulation/homeownership.

5) Civic Engagement/Political Clout

In 2016, African Americans accounted for 12.3% of eligible voters in the U.S., up from 11.6% in 2004, while Latinos increased from 8.2% in 2004 to 11.9% in 2016, and White Americans decreased from 75.2% to 68.9% during the same period (Frey, 2017). In the 2016 election, however, African American voter turnout was 59.6%, representing a decline of 7.1% from 2012 and the lowest since 2000. Latino voter turnout was less than 50.0%. Both rates are lower than the 65.3% turnout for eligible White American voters. In that election Michigan turned from a Blue state to a Red one.

Summit participants during the morning session identified a number of issues that need to be addressed to increase the representation of African Americans and Latinos in elected office. These included:

- Increasing voter participation/voter education;
- Prioritizing shared interests over party politics;
- Electing qualified persons of color;
- Identifying funding sources and volunteers to support candidates; and
- Supporting each other's candidates.

6) Voter Suppression

Conservatives have been concerned about the unfolding demographic shift which will end the numeric majority of White Americans by mid-century. Their response has been to diminish the voter influence among Latinos, African Americans, and other population segments to ensure Republican electoral dominance through voter suppression. That is, developing and implementing policies that reduce the number of voters within these communities. In the past it was done through poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses. Today this is done through voter restrictions such as requiring a state-issued identification (ID) card, closing down state offices that issue ID cards, weakening of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and other tactics. In short, undermining voting rights and the democratic process.

Summit participants identified voter suppression as a key challenge facing African American and Latino communities in Michigan. In particular, participants identified gerrymandering as a critical issue limiting African American and Latino electoral power. Gerrymandering is a process through which voting district lines are drawn to “pack” one party’s voters into as few seats as possible or to “crack” voters by spreading them over multiple districts. Employing a measure called the “efficiency gap,” which divides the difference between each party’s “wasted” votes—

votes for losing candidates, as well as votes for winning candidates beyond the number needed to win—shows a 10.1% gap favoring Republicans in the 2016 Michigan House races, 15.5% in Congressional races, and 22.8% in the 2014 Senate races. Thus, while Democrats received 0.5% more votes than Republicans in 2016 state House races, Republicans still claimed 63 of 110 seats (Roelofs, 2017).

7) Criminal Justice Reform

According to a 2016 report from the Sentencing Project, African Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 5.1 times that for White Americans, while Latinos are incarcerated at a rate 1.4 times that for White Americans (Nellis, 2016). The report notes, though, that “given the absence or unreliability of ethnicity data in some states, the racial/ethnic disparities in those states may be understated,” with Latinos often counted in the White prison population (Nellis, 2016, p. 4). In Michigan, African Americans accounted for 53.6% of the prison population in 2014, while only making up 14.0% of the total state population, making Michigan one of 12 states where more than half of the prison population is Black. Conversely, Latinos were counted as only 1.0% of the prison population in Michigan, compared to 4.7% of the total state population, though this may be attributable to many Latino prisoners being counted as White. Of concern is the fact that Michigan does not report incarceration rates by standard categories of race/ethnicity, a practice that conceals the profile of incarcerated persons.

Summit participants identified the following as crucial aspects of meaningful criminal justice reform that demand attention:

- Presumptive parole;
- Decriminalization of certain crimes;
- Prisoner reentry;
- Privatization of prisons; and
- Disparate rates of detention, conviction, incarceration.

8) Anti-Blackness

Summit participants identified anti-Blackness as a key challenge facing Black and Brown communities in Michigan. Anti-Blackness can refer generally to anti-Black racism in practice, but also to a philosophical framing of Blackness as “the non-Humanity against which all Human life distinguishes itself” in Western thought (Kline, 2017, p. 52). In practice, anti-Black racism does not exist only within the dominant racial group, but also is manifested in various ways in communities of color. Countering anti-Blackness therefore requires recognizing and addressing anti-Black perspectives and practices in Latino communities, as well as colorism and internalized racism within both African American and Latino communities.

9) Trauma/Historical Crimes against Humanity

Summit participants identified a need to address historical crimes against humanity that con-

tinue to impact African American and Latino communities, as well as indigenous communities in the United States. Atrocities committed against African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have left indelible marks in the collective conscience of survivors, marks which when coupled with centuries of domination in all life areas have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of these groups. In particular, participants identified the importance of acknowledging and healing from the intergenerational traumas of slavery, genocide and colonialism in the U.S. Healing will require a process of:

- Repairing, restoring, and reclaiming well-being to achieve social justice.

10) Immigration

According to a Migration Policy Institute report, 6.6% of the total population of Michigan was foreign born in 2015. Those identifying as Black or African American accounted for 4.8% of the foreign-born population of the state and 14.5% of the U.S. or native-born population; Latinos accounted for 16.6% of the foreign-born population and 4.1% of the native-born population, and White Americans accounted for 53.9% of foreign-born and 80.4% of native-born. Approximately 52.5% of the foreign-born population were naturalized citizens and 47.5% were noncitizens. According to the American Immigration Council (2017), there were 130,000 undocumented immigrants in Michigan in 2014, comprising 20% of the total immigrant population. In 2016, there were more than 5,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients in Michigan, with 72% (7,339) of DACA-eligible immigrants having applied for DACA status. Summit participants identified the following dimensions of immigration that require attention:

- Lack of resources/lack of information about resources for immigrants; and
- Human rights violations and social injustice.
- Deplorable conditions and treatment in detention centers.

Ways to Address Issues

During the afternoon session, tables were designated with one of the ten priority issues and participants chose tables based on which issue they wished to discuss. Each group then worked to unpack the dimensions of their issue, and identified steps that could be taken to address the issue. A speaker from each group then presented a report to all attendees. A summary of the results is provided below.

1) Education

The Education Working Group offered several suggestions to increase educational opportunities for African American and Latino youth. The first suggestion was the creation of community schools, which typically involve partnerships between public schools and other community resources to provide not only education, but also access to health and social services, as well as an emphasis on community development. The group also acknowledged the importance of having school staff and curricula that are representative of the student body in order to increase student engagement. They further cited the need for an equitable distribution of funding for

public schools, as well as zero tolerance for corruption among members of school boards. They further stressed the importance of acknowledging and rewarding progress in efforts to improve educational opportunities, rather than focusing exclusively on setbacks. Likewise, they proposed increased “friendraising,” a process of building community in support of education.

2) Healthcare/Mental Healthcare

The Healthcare/Mental Healthcare Working Group identified a number of issues that need to be addressed in terms of access to healthcare for African American and Latino communities. These include recognizing the impact of social determinants of health, including racism and implicit bias within the healthcare system. They also noted that care providers often do not reflect the communities in which they serve. They further identified as barriers to access the lack of education about the healthcare system, lack of access to resources, and the often prohibitive costs of healthcare.

Moving forward, the group offered a five-part model for improving access to healthcare. The first step in their model is to identify resources and coalitions that currently exist, as well as the points where there are resource gaps. The next step is to educate the community about the healthcare system. The third step is to engage in action, advocacy, outreach, and implementation, with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in this process. The fourth step is to develop a system to measure progress and to promote accountability. The final step is to reassess and to then update the initiative based on what works and what doesn’t work.

3) Cross-cultural Communication/Collaboration

The Cross-cultural Communication/Collaboration Working Group offered several suggestions for improving relations between African American and Latino communities in order to better use our collective power. These included improving relations by placing emphasis on interpersonal, community, and institutional levels of communication and collaboration. On the interpersonal level, they suggested addressing unspoken tensions between members of the two communities and developing tools for cross-cultural collaboration. On the community level, they recommended that each community support the other economically and by attending each other’s events, and recognizing where our histories converge. On the institutional level, they recommended diversifying board leadership at organizations that serve Black and Brown communities and by representation on community and government boards generally.

4) Community Economic Development and Empowerment

The Community Economic Development and Empowerment Working Group offered several suggestions for increasing economic empowerment in African American and Latino communities and provided examples of initiatives that have had some successes. For instance, they stressed the need for increased acquisition and management of wealth among African Americans and Latinos, partially through the purchase of land, and they mentioned that the Genesee County Land Bank, while not perfect, has offered a path to homeownership for Flint residents. They also identified a need for greater access to capital for young entrepreneurs who are persons of color, suggesting the solicitation of angel donors. They further noted a need for greater educa-

tion around financial literacy, as well as the importance of entrepreneurship and membership in business associations.

5) Civic Engagement/Political Clout

Acknowledging that by working together Black and Brown communities will receive a bigger piece of the political economic pie, the Civic Engagement/Political Clout Working Group provided recommendations for increasing civic engagement and political representation among African Americans and Latinos. These include Black and Brown voter registration and education drives; a Black and Brown—and indigenous—media initiative, termed the “resistance channel”; and persuading permanent residents to become citizens in order to become eligible voters—as well as providing free resources to support the citizenship application process. They advocated for a statewide Circle Indigenous Race Community Leadership Empowerment (C.I.R.C.L.E.) model to bring together Black, Brown, and indigenous communities to work collaboratively toward these goals.

6) Voter Suppression

The Voter Suppression Working Group identified a number of issues that impact the voting rights of African Americans and Latinos and offered suggestions for increasing the voting power of African American and Latino communities. The first issue they identified was gerrymandering, and specifically the “packing and cracking” processes through which minorities are packed into a few districts or cracked into many districts, both of which work to limit the electoral power of whichever voting segments are targeted; in this case, African Americans and Latinos. Group members also pointed out that voter ID laws disproportionately impact seniors and young people, and proposed that poll workers be better trained regarding IDs and that different forms of identification be accepted at polling places. At the policy level, currently the anti-gerrymandering initiative in Michigan, Voters Not Politicians, has submitted signatures to place a measure calling for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission on the November, 2018 statewide ballot. This measure calls for African American and Latino engagement.

Group members also raised the issue of voter confidence and barriers to voting, including voter intimidation, cross-state checks and indiscriminate voter purges, long lines in Black and Brown communities, and insufficient numbers of voting machines. They proposed that all polling stations issue paper voting verification so that voters know their votes are being counted.

The group concluded with a number of recommendations for increasing voter participation in and representation of African American and Latino communities in elected offices. These included extending the number of voting days, holding polls on Sundays, and allowing same day registration. They also stressed the importance of voting in every election, including state and local, to ensure representation and political influence. They further noted the importance of African Americans and Latinos being counted in the Census to ensure accuracy and inclusiveness, and suggested educating undocumented immigrants about the confidentiality of Census data.

7) Criminal Justice Reform

The Criminal Justice Reform Working Group offered a number of suggestions for positive

reform of the criminal justice system, and suggested that reform is needed in other areas to reduce reliance on the criminal justice system. In particular, they suggested reform is needed in the areas of education, mental health, and the economy because it is when these systems fail that individuals in dire poverty, particularly minorities, disproportionately enter the criminal justice system. With regard to the justice system itself, they recommended eliminating the policy that treats 17 year-olds as adults and raise the age to 18 to reduce the number of incarcerated youth in Michigan. Further, it would end the practice of housing youths with adult offenders. Group members also recommended increased oversight of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES), including greater accountability, evaluation of police academies, and enhanced training for law enforcement officers. They advocated for greater representation of persons of color working in the criminal justice system, including on police forces, in courts, and in correctional facilities. They also advocated for an end to the privatization of prisons. While some social justice activists have called for the elimination of police departments, this group recommended against eliminating police forces, emphasizing the importance of public safety. Further recommendations included the creation of county identification cards for those who cannot obtain state IDs, eliminating questions about criminal history on employment application forms, decriminalization of certain offences such as drug possession, and model programs/trainings, such as the Power to Thrive program, and diversion programs. In short, they called for a return to prevention and rehabilitation rather than continuing punishment and profitmaking.

8) Anti-Blackness

The Anti-Blackness Working Group identified several dimensions of anti-Blackness as they exist within Black and Brown communities, and offered suggestions for countering anti-Blackness. They noted in particular the existence of skin privilege not only in the larger society, but also within both Black and Brown communities, and even within families. In Latino communities, lighter skin tones are considered more desirable than darker skin tones; as such, Afro-Latinos, for example, are often rendered invisible. Likewise, in African American communities those on the dark end of the spectrum often have it the hardest.

To combat internalized anti-Blackness, the group suggested that we must rewrite the narrative by telling our own stories and speaking our truths about our collective experiences. Group members further suggested planting the seeds of our history to demonstrate our centrality within the nation. They recommended Saturday schools, churches, and grassroots organizing as sites for promoting a more equitable portrayal of our histories. They suggested being in spaces with people who are different from us as a tool to overcome prejudice and misconceptions, and they proposed making friends of persons who hate our people most as a way to change minds one person at a time. The metaphor of “connecting with the Klan” was used to make the point.

9) Trauma/Historical Crimes against Humanity

The Trauma/Historical Crimes against Humanity Working Group provided a number of suggestions for addressing legacies of slavery, genocide, and colonialism. They recommended first defining the relationship of Black and Brown communities to the United States, and establishing global ties with groups confronting similar legacies. They also stressed the importance of knowing and sharing our own histories and producing knowledge by us and for us, as well as acknowl-

edging and defining our trauma and validating our social pain through stories of shared lived experiences. They identified the creation of spaces for multi-generational education as necessary in this regard. They advocated for proclaiming the U.S. an apartheid state, and for using U.S. laws to highlight contradictions regarding the treatment of African American and Latino communities. Further, they recommended using the tools of our own knowledge for liberation of all, rather than as tools of oppression. Finally, they highlighted the importance of sharing resources and building alliances between Black and Brown communities, and expanding our networks to interstitch our communities.

10) Immigration

The Immigration Working Group recommended several steps to address the plight of immigrant communities. They first recommended updating the process for applying for legal status to make it more accessible, specifically by lowering the cost to apply and by using plain language in application documents. They also took stock of the existing resources available to immigrants, including sanctuary cities, the existing visa system, programs for refugees, DACA, and IDs and driver's licenses. They advocated for grassroots organizing to build coalitions; present immigrants' stories to dispel myths and change the public narrative; develop and empower local leaders to support immigrants and immigration reform; unite Black and Brown communities under one vision; and provide cultural competency training to immigration and naturalization officers and staff. They also stressed the need for comprehensive immigration reform that offers a pathway to legal status for all immigrants, as well as access to resources and opportunities, and they advocated for the de-privatization of immigrant detention facilities in order to protect the human rights of those detained.

Moving Forward

This initial summit represents a first step in ongoing dialogues to improve relations between African Americans and Latinos in Michigan and increase collaboration between them. Summit participants identified key challenges facing Michigan's African American and Latino communities and offered important suggestions for addressing these challenges. Moving forward, the task of those engaged in Black/Brown dialogues is to develop concrete plans to implement the recommendations put forth during the Summit.

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APPENDIX A:
List of Participants

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Ethriam Brammer	Diana Hernandez	Nino Rodriguez
Gayle Branch	Alvin Herring	Adrian Vazquez
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Joe Darden	Linda Lee Tarver	Donald Weatherspoon
Richard Davila	Barry Lewis	Sheryl Weir
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Debbie DeLeon	Hilda Mejia Abreu	
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Mark Fancher	Xhercis Mendez	
Delia Fernandez	Lissette Mira-Amaya	
Hiram Fitzgerald	Gwen Moffitt	
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Jesus “Chuy” Garcia	Armando Ojeda	
Luis Garcia	Gloria Palmisano	
Sue Garza	Carlos Pava	

APPENDIX B:
Steering Committee

Janie Brooks-Davis
Morse Brown
Darryle Buchanan
Glen Chambers

Richard Davila
Barbara James Norman
Pastor Melvin Jones
Rubén Martínez

Marvin McKinney
Angela G. Reyes
Saturnino Rodríguez



**“Our separate struggles are really one—a struggle for freedom,
for dignity and for humanity.”**

MLK Jr. to César Chávez, Sept. 22, 1966

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