Pursuing Democracy's Promise:

NEWCOMER CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA

GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

in collaboration with

FUNDERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Researched and written by
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About Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) seeks to move the philanthropic field to advance the contributions and address the needs of the world's growing and increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee populations. With a core focus on the United States, GCIR provides grantmakers with opportunities for learning, networking, and collaboration, as well as information resources that:

- Enhance philanthropy's awareness of issues affecting immigrants and refugees;
- Deepen the field's understanding of how these issues are integral to community building in today's dynamic social, economic, and political environment; and
- Increase philanthropic support for both broad and immigrant/refugee-focused strategies that benefit newcomer populations and strengthen the larger society.

GCIR's work is animated by a fundamental belief in democratic values, equal opportunity, and justice for all immigrants and refugees. We recognize the significant contributions that newcomers and their children make to the economic, cultural, and social fabric of their new communities. These contributions will only increase in light of their unprecedented growth and diversity in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States and in many other countries around the world. Given these factors, GCIR firmly believes that:

- Immigrant and refugee issues are central community-building issues for philanthropy.
- Philanthropic institutions are leaders in proactively integrating diverse immigrant populations into the larger community.
- Community institutions and immigrant-based organizations, with strong support from the philanthropic sector, make a substantial positive impact on the lives of immigrants and refugees.

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About Funders' Committee on Civic Participation

The Funders' Committee for Civic Participation is a group of grantmakers committed to enhancing democratic involvement in all dimensions of civic life including elections, governance, media and civil society with a particular concern for disenfranchised and disempowered communities. Its mission is to provide education about barriers to full participation, strategies for fostering democratic involvement, and the means by which effective strategies can be supported through grant making.

The Committee Co-Chairpersons are Jackie Berrien, Program Officer of Governance & Civil Society at the Ford Foundation, and Karen Byrne.

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Preface

An invitation
to explore the principles,
pathways, and power
of immigrant
civic participation.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) and Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) joined forces to research and produce *Pursuing Democracy's Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America* to call the philanthropic community's attention to the critical importance of engaging immigrants and refugees in civic life and integrating them fully into our society.

Immigration in recent decades has transformed communities across the United States. Given the changing face of America, foundations are increasingly recognizing that their grantmaking strategies must respond to the needs and contributions of newcomers and, as importantly, ensure that newcomers join with the native born as full and vital participants in building strong, healthy communities.

This report seeks to help foundations across a range of funding interests understand the contributions immigrants and their children can make to their communities, when given opportunities through strong organizations. Using concrete examples, it also demonstrates the value of immigrant civic engagement in advancing broader community goals, from improving educational, health, and employment outcomes to redistributing political power and building a more vibrant democracy.

Civic participation is an end in itself, providing an important vehicle for newcomer integration. It is also an effective means to address social, economic, and political disparities facing society. These two pursuits reinforce one another, and funders are entering the field through both doorways.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

To help the reader navigate the report and make the most effective use of its information, we have organized the document into three distinct sections:

Part I, aimed at funders new to immigrant issues and new to this field, introduces the basics of immigrant civic participation; grantmaking approaches to program analysis, design, and evaluation; and recommendations on funding needs and opportunities.

Part II looks at engagement through powerful stories of seven immigrants and the community organizations with which they worked. These stories explore how and why they became engaged and the difference that civic participation has made in their lives and the lives of their families and communities.

Part III focuses on the organizations that provide the "recruiting networks" to civic and political engagement for newcomers, examining various models and pathways for civic and political participation. More experienced civic participation funders may wish to go directly to this section.

To make the publication as inviting and accessible as possible, case studies and illustrative practices are set apart in sidebars. We also compiled resources in the field and suggested readings in the Appendices for readers who wish to engage in a deeper exploration.

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SCOPE OF THE REPORT

As America's newcomer populations have diversified and dispersed across the country, immigrant civic participation efforts have proliferated. As a result, the report, by necessity, has been selective in coverage.

Case examples offer what we hope to be a balanced representation of national origins, race and ethnicity, traditional immigrant strongholds, and new immigrant destinations. Unable to include every exemplary approach, organization, or issue that has motivated immigrant civic participation, the report highlights basic principles and promising pathways that can be applied, replicated, and/or adapted to any issue area.

The policy context changed many times during the report's preparation, and some aspects of the report will certainly have become outdated by the publication date. But immigrant civic participation continues during the continuing ebbs and flows of policy, and the report's core content is intended to have a lengthy shelf life.

The interviews and literature review upon which the report draws have been equally extensive; unless otherwise cited, the many field practitioners and experts who were interviewed provide the source for information in the report.

The reader should also note that, in most cases, we have not made a distinction between undocumented and documented immigrants, primarily because that distinction is not relevant to the understanding and intent of the report. Despite many barriers to civic and political participation, non-citizens, including those without legal status, can become involved in our democracy through well-designed programs that create pathways for engagement.

AN INVITATION

We believe the report will be a great resource to foundations, both those already supporting immigrant civic participation and those who are considering entering the field. We also hope the contents will help draw interest from funders working in related disciplines who can incorporate civic participation strategies to leverage the impact of their work.

Foundations often play an important role in advancing social change, and their investments have been crucial to most of the civic and political participation models showcased here. With the support of grants of varying size and purpose, these programs were able to get off the ground, grow, reflect on their work, change course, and evaluate their impact. We invite you to explore the following pages to learn about the many ways in which immigrant civic participation initiatives can improve the quality of life in our communities, create needed policy change, and revitalize our democracy.

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Executive Summary

Civic participtionn educates and integrates newcomers as they engage with others to improve their communities.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE

Record-breaking growth and diversity of the immigrant population in recent decades have created a demographic imperative for the integration of newcomers into American society. One in nine of us is now foreign-born.[1] Immigrant and refugee families from every corner of the globe are living, working, and going to school in towns and cities well beyond traditional urban receiving areas. In the 37 states never before considered as immigrant destinations, the foreign-born population during the 1990s grew at twice the rate of the six historic gateway states.[2]

Like the ancestors of today's native born, newcomers fill crucial jobs, revitalize communities, and contribute to the nation's social and economic growth. And like previous generations of immigrants who came before them, today's newcomers also face challenges to participation and integration. Discrimination, cross-cultural misunderstanding, and injustice in the workplace and the community can create cynicism and erect formidable barriers to engagement and integration. Long hours at work can steal time from family and community life; limited formal education can stall the learning of English and full entry into society. Parents who are isolated can pass isolation on to the next generation.

Yet, with the critically important support of foundation-funded community organizations, more and more newcomers—whether they are undocumented immigrants or naturalized citizens, restaurant workers or high-tech professionals, from Africa, Asia, or Central America—are overcoming these challenges by becoming actively engaged at all levels of our democracy. This report highlights but a few examples of their participation and the impact they are having at the grassroots, grasstops, and every level in between. As their numbers continue to grow, immigrants and their families, with strategic community interventions, can play an increasingly important role in strengthening the social fabric of our country.

GROWING PHILANTHROPIC INTEREST

Responding to demographic change, foundations of varying type, geographic focus, and funding priority are investing in a range of newcomer civic participation strategies.

- Foundations with categorical interests are successfully using immigrant civic engagement to improve health, education, youth, and employment outcomes. They are funding, for example, programs to engage parents in their children's education, train health *promotoras* to do prevention education, and bring diverse youth together to organize against racial and ethnic profiling.

- Foundations seeking systemic policy reform in these areas are recognizing immigrants to be important allies and often leaders in policy advocacy and organizing efforts that they support.

- Likewise, foundations devoted to the preservation of worker, civil, and/or human rights are funding efforts that engage immigrants in the struggle, recognizing the impact of these issues on immigrants and the important role immigrants can play in effective change.

- Foundations with interest in improving intergroup relations, building community, and reviving civic life are actively involving our 11 percent and growing foreign-born population, drawing on their strengths and assets to address these persistent community challenges.

- Growing numbers of foundations interested in improving social conditions of any kind are acknowledging that both newcomers and the community at large have a stake in and stand to benefit from immigrant civic participation. They also understand that, in the absence of engagement and integration, the isolation of newcomers can only lead to greater problems.

- Regardless of their funding priorities, many foundations are increasingly recognizing immigrants and refugees as a key population to which they must respond. Many are asking important questions about how their grantee organizations are engaging newcomers in their work and integrating this growing population into the broader community.

THE VALUE OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Civic participation is the process that draws newcomers into collective problem solving to improve conditions in matters affecting their lives. Based on the democratic belief that sustainable social improvement is possible only when those experiencing problems are involved in learning how to solve them, civic participation turns communities into places of intentional learning and relationship building. It does so by engaging people collectively in all aspects of problem selection and solution: identification and analysis of issues, research and planning toward strategies of approach, and implementation and evaluation of these strategic plans.

Both an end in itself and a means to other ends, newcomer participation produces results at individual, organizational, and community levels. Through civic participation, newcomers:

- Develop their **human capital**, i.e., their individual potential, leadership, and voice, with measures of acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In the words of one immigrant civic participant, *"Before, I was shy and scared, but [becoming involved] helped me to build my own voice. I can go everywhere now... We women are hungry to bring Somali power to the community."*

- Build **social capital**, i.e., networks of human and institutional relationships, with measures of depth, breadth, diversity, and durability. One community organizer puts it this way: *"To build relationships, you want to focus on what's common, get people working together to improve quality-of-life issues they share."*

- Develop **institutional capital**, i.e., democratic, membership-based organizations, with measures of member ownership and participation in decision making and governance. A community-based researcher offers this analysis: *"We can't change education levels, English language skills, and economic levels overnight. But we can change organizations to engage immigrants. Without these organizations, we can't have immigrant civic participation."*

- Create **community capital**, i.e., positive community change, with measures of policies improved, systems and institutions made more accountable, problems solved or prevented. A former director of a worker center writes, *"On September 17, 1997, Governor George Pataki of New York signed the Unpaid Wages Prohibition Act, giving New York State the strongest wage enforcement law in the country. That Act was won through a campaign conceived of and led by immigrant workers."*[3]

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- **Become full, contributing members of American society and democratic life.** This is true for all immigrants, regardless of their immigration status. From an immigrant labor leader: *"Even though not everyone can vote, everyone can participate."*

FUNDAMENTAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Four fundamental principles shape *effective civic participation efforts* and can assist foundations in evaluating projects and institutions engaging newcomers in civic life.

- ***Engagement is paramount.*** Newcomers are encouraged to engage in all aspects of community problem solving.

- ***Participation starts where the newcomer starts.*** More than likely this begins with working on issues that affect their daily lives, not in a voting booth or a political campaign, though it is the way to get there.

- ***Education informs all.*** Learning is at the core of program design.

- ***Relationship matters.*** Building relationships with people from different backgrounds is a central program component.

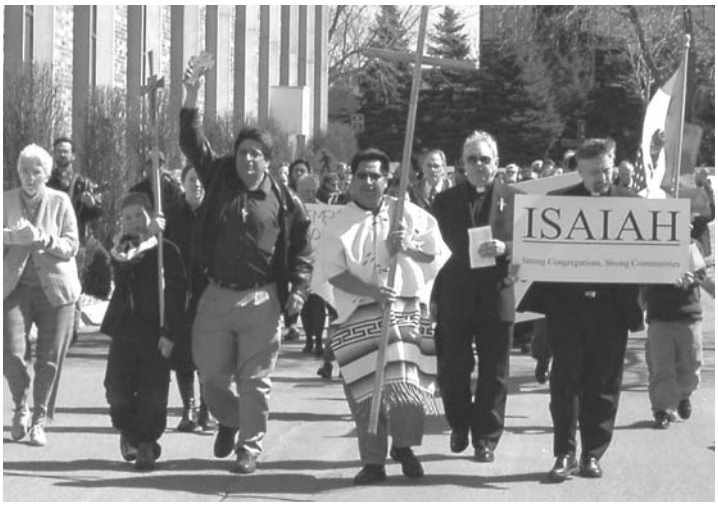
DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOUNDATION INVESTMENT

Guided by the principles of community organizing and popular education, newcomer civic participation takes place in a variety of organizational settings, including national community organizing networks and neighborhood centers; affiliations through the affinities of faith, ethnicity, and common concern; and unions, churches, schools, and community arts programs.

These diverse pathways to civic engagement for immigrants offer rich opportunities for philanthropic investment, such as:

- ***Naturalization programs that integrate civic participation*** into their curricula, making the preparation for citizenship a preparation for full engagement in civic life.
- ***National and local faith-based organizing networks*** that organize immigrants around key social and economic issues as wide-ranging as health care, community disinvestment, police brutality, and workers' rights.
- ***Efforts to promote cultural expression and exchange*** that provide immigrants and refugees a powerful entrée into public life and an opportunity to build relationships with native-born communities.
- ***Youth organizing institutions*** that cultivate the leadership of young people, often bringing them together across lines of race, ethnicity, religion, and immigration status.
- ***Community-labor partnerships*** that engage low-wage immigrant workers and their allies in improving wages, working conditions, and community life.
- ***Worker Centers and Hometown Associations*** that are emerging avenues for immigrant civic engagement and leadership development on many levels, from organizing soccer leagues to fighting against unscrupulous employers to raising funds for community-improvement projects.
- ***Training and technical assistance intermediaries*** that are developing immigrant organizers and helping service and advocacy institutions integrate civic participation approaches into their work.
- ***Non-partisan voter education, get-out-the-vote efforts, and leadership development programs*** that give immigrants of any status, regardless of their ability to vote, the tools they need to engage effectively in our nation's political process.

Civic engagement is the democracy at work, producing multiple outcomes of positive change, interrelated goals that cannot be reached in other ways. As America's demographic diversity becomes inevitably more representative of the diversity of the world, simultaneously testing our ideals and increasing our assets, foundations of many types and priorities have reason to consider investment in newcomer civic participation.



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Recommendations to Funders:
12 Strategies to Advance Newcomer Civic & Political Participation

Foundations can help to advance the field of newcomer civic and political participation in many ways.

1. Ask current and prospective grantees how the demographics of their communities have changed, and whether and how they are working with newcomers.

2. Encourage and support current and prospective grantees working with or among newcomer populations to use participatory approaches, moving from service delivery and/or advocacy to the authentic engagement of immigrant clients and program participants in their work.

3. Encourage and support organizing and popular education groups to meaningfully improve their engagement of immigrants.

4. Fund peer-based cross-learning and capacity building for immigrant civic participation efforts.

5. Attend closely to opportunities created by changing policies and follow with targeted grantmaking to promote immigrant participation.

6. Seek opportunities to coordinate grantmaking with other foundations, with the goal of growing dense, interlocking networks of leaders and institutions working to promote civic and political participation.

7. Encourage and support public institutions to promote immigrant civic participation.

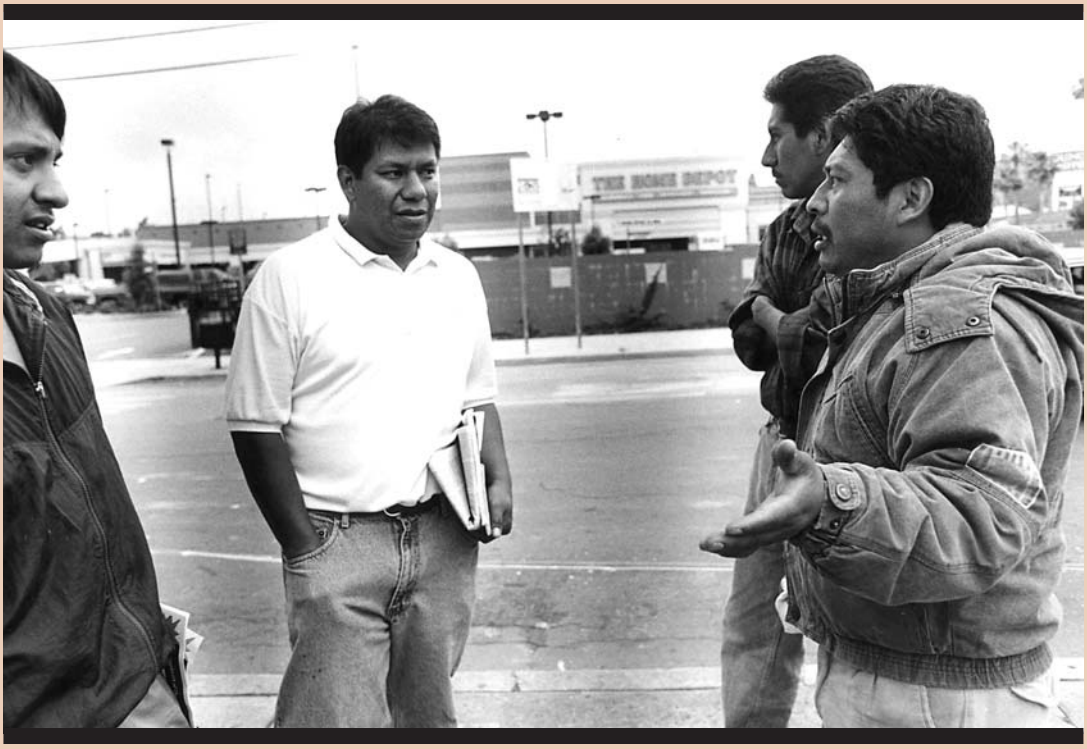
8. Help raise the public visibility of and public support for the value of immigrant civic participation.

9. Support non-partisan programs that encourage voter registration and participation and engage both those who can and cannot vote.

10. Invest in the development of policies, such as public financing and non-citizen voting in local elections, which bolster newcomer political participation.

11. Support programs that link newcomers interested in elected office with immigrant elected officials who can serve as role models.

12. Fund research and support efforts to help the field find improved methods of evaluating the success of immigrant civic and political participation programs and strategies.



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Part I.

Newcomer Civic Participation: What It Is, Why It Matters, How Foundations Make a Difference

Civic participation educates and integrates newcomers as they engage with others to improve their communities.

CHAPTER 1
Introduction: Immigrant Civic Participation Is the American Story

A DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE

There is scarcely a state, city, town, or person in America unaffected by the demographic changes our country has experienced due to immigration in recent decades. The foreign-born population increased by almost 1.6 million, or approximately five percent, in the year 2001 alone,[4] continuing the record-breaking volumes of the 1990s, when over 13 million immigrants entered the country.[5]

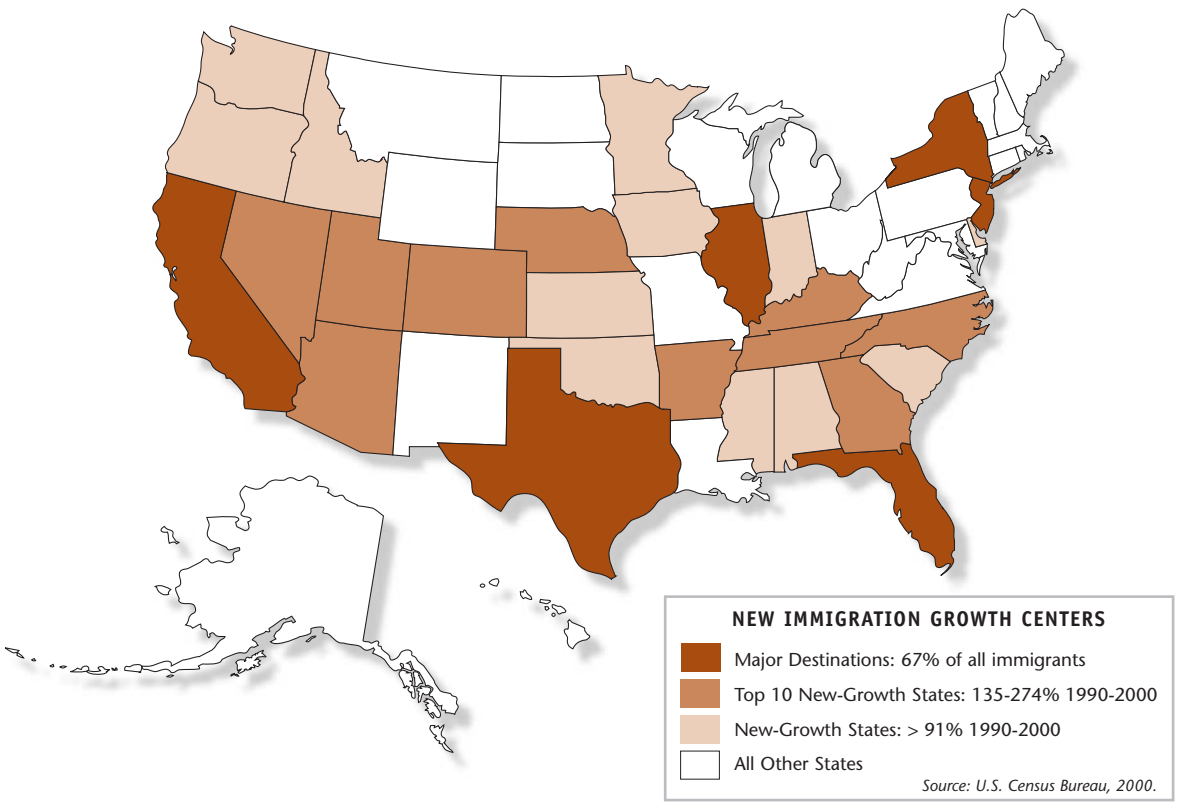
Approximately 34 million of us, about one in nine, were born outside the United States.[6] And although the traditional receiving states of California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, and New York continue to attract large numbers, newcomers are now everywhere. In the 37 states never before considered as immigrant destinations, the foreign-born population during the 1990s grew at twice the rate of these six historic gateways.[7]

As has been true throughout the history of immigration to the United States, some of these new neighbors have escaped persecution in their homelands. Some have sought to reunify with family members. All have come to provide a better life for their families through hard work.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE ECONOMY, REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES

Like those who preceded them, newcomers have become integral to the economy, where they are making important contributions. Immigrants accounted for half of all new entries into the U.S. labor force in the 1990s,[8] fueling growth in many industries and, according to a 1997 National Academy of Sciences study, adding approximately $10 billion annually to the U.S. economy.[9]

Immigrants are reinvigorating communities. In their book *Comeback Cities*, Paul Grogan, President of The Boston Foundation and former Executive Director of Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and foundation consultant Tony Proscio specifically cite newcomer consumers and investors for their contribution to the renewal of the American inner-city.[10] "Immigration is the single most important factor for dividing winning cities from losing cities," says Grogan.[11]



Rural communities have been similarly transformed. For example, the increase in the Latino worker population from four percent in the early 1990s to almost 25 percent in 2000 reversed economic decline in the dairy town of Yuma, Colorado, creating new businesses and increasing car sales, consumer loans, and property values.[12]

CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEMOCRACY

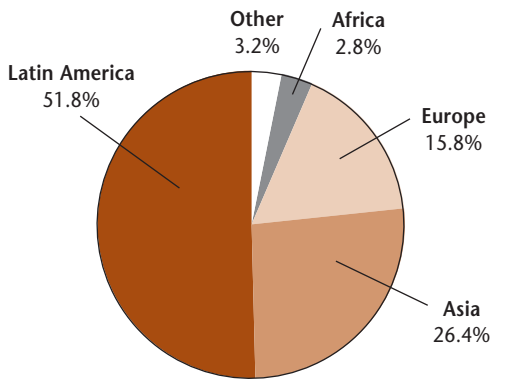
Immigrants are also reinvigorating the political landscape. Between the elections of 1996 and 2000, as numbers of the naturalized grew, the foreign-born voting group increased by 20 percent.[13] These immigrants and refugees are establishing themselves as important swing voters, representing great diversity of political outlook across class and generation and within generic ethnic categories.

Beyond casting ballots, newcomers are increasingly active more broadly in electoral politics, from registering voters to running as candidates. Approximately 100 immigrants and refugees now hold state elected office across the country.[14]

But the contributions of newcomer civic participation do not necessarily start or end with elections. Through collective problem solving, immigrants are making a difference at community and policy levels. For example:

- When Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), an affiliate of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), partnered with the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools and the Oakland Unified School District to create a Small Schools Policy, immigrant parents were at the center of the work, active both as leaders of the organizing effort and members of the school site councils.

ORIGINS OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

- When Chicago's Albany Park Neighborhood Council built parent leadership teams in six schools, cleaned up toxic dumps, and won a million dollars in local capital improvements, its collective planning meetings were held in five different languages.[15]

- And when the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) launched its campaign to raise the minimum wage in Florida, the organizers knew that engaging immigrants was pivotal to their success.

THE AMERICAN STORY

The democratic experience of participating with others to solve community problems strengthens immigrants, the communities in which they live, and the democracy itself. Through civic participation, newcomers:

- Educate themselves, developing their human capital through the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior;

- Build networks of trusting relationships with those from like and unlike backgrounds, developing, respectively, the "bonding" and "bridging" social capital that sociologist Robert Putnam has argued to be essential to healthy communities;[16]

- Contribute to positive outcomes of social change; and

- Integrate into American society, a process by which they, as did the ancestors of the native born, reinvigorate the democracy by participating in it.

The story of such immigrant civic participation is the story of America. It was immigrants and their descendants whom Alexis de Tocqueville was observing in the early Nineteenth Century when he wrote in *Democracy in America* that "Americans of all ages, all stations of life, and all types of dispositions are forever forming associations...of a thousand different types...Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention..."[17]

The Progressive Era, during which so many of the Twentieth Century's voluntary civic associations were created, coincided with the last great wave of immigration to the United States (almost 27 million newcomers arrived between 1870 and 1920[18]). Some of these associations (for example, the Settlement Houses) were intended to assist immigrant integration; others were created by immigrants themselves. Not all were related to or favorable toward newcomers. But clearly the explosion of creativity in civic life was associated with the dramatic demographic and accompanying economic changes taking place in America at the time.

WHY PHILANTHROPY SHOULD CARE

We may well be in the midst of another such explosion in civic creativity. There is no denying that rapidly increasing diversity has stretched our social fabric. Discrimination, injustice, and miscommunication across cultures can create cynicism and isolation that can be passed to future generations. Immigrants face formidable structural barriers to participation, including long working hours, low pay, and lack of formal education that can slow their acquisition of English. The post-September 11, 2001 political climate has severely set back newcomer integration.

But stressful times can stimulate social inventiveness. From local community activism to electoral campaigns, immigrants at the beginning of the new century are participating in civic life in ways that are as dynamic and diverse as the newcomers themselves.

Strong community organizations with well-designed programs serve as the crucial portals of engagement for these newcomers, organizations built upon the democratic belief that sustainable social improvement can be achieved only when those experiencing problems are involved in learning how to solve them. In the country's changing demographic landscape, such institutions have drawn increasing interest from foundations with many priorities.

- Foundations with categorical interests in the improvement of health, education, youth, employment, and other key issues are successfully using strategies of active engagement (parents in their children's schools, health *promotoras* in the community) to achieve positive outcomes.
- Foundations seeking systemic policy reform in these areas are finding immigrant civic participants to be important allies, who care greatly about the issues and play important roles in winning policy change.
- Foundations with interest in improving intergroup relations, building community and reviving civic life are actively involving our 11 percent and growing foreign-born population, drawing on their strengths and assets to address these persistent community challenges.

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- Foundations devoted to the preservation of worker, civil and/or human rights are augmenting their efforts by engaging immigrants in the struggle, promoting both the responsibilities and the rights of newcomer participation in community life.
- Growing numbers of foundations interested in improving social conditions of any kind are recognizing that communities at large as well as newcomers have a stake in immigrant civic participation; they are realizing that, in the absence of engagement and integration, the isolation of newcomers can only lead to greater problems.
- Irrespective of funding priorities, many foundations are increasingly recognizing immigrants and refugees as a key population to which they must respond. Many are asking important questions about how grantee organizations are engaging newcomers in their work and integrating this growing population into the broader community.

This report highlights many examples of how foundations committed to improving social conditions are supporting innovative programs that actively engage immigrants and refugees in civic and political life. Such support capitalizes on the idealism, vitality, and commitment newcomers bring to their adopted homeland. It recognizes that the engagement and integration of immigrants in American life is good for us all.

Chapter 2
The Centrality of Engagement, the Importance of Institutions

Conscious, active engagement of newcomers in collective problem solving is key to their participation in and integration into democracy. Engagement is something different from providing services to newcomers, as important as those services are. Engagement is different, too, from advocating for policy changes on behalf of immigrants. Civic participation involves immigrants in advocating for themselves.

The approach is that of community-based, experiential education, turning communities into places of learning and relationship building for immigrants and the native born alike.

In their influential study *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics,* researchers Verba, Schlozman, and Brady maintain that the ability to participate in civic life rests upon three factors: motivation, capacity, and networks of recruitment.[19] All three elements are important to successful civic participation strategies among immigrants.

MOTIVATION

People engage around the issues that matter to them. To draw a person out of the living room and into a meeting room, it is often necessary to start in the living room. Learning a family's desires and aspirations, challenges, and frustrations is a critical first step in building relationships that lay the foundation for civic engagement.

Ernesto Cortes, a lead community organizer for the faith-based Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), describes the matter of motivation this way: "If I want to organize you, I don't sell you an idea. What I do, if I'm smart, is try to find out what's your interest...You've got to be the owner. Otherwise, it's my cause, my organization. You've got nothing!" [20]

Civic participation, that is, starts where people are, identifying motivating issues that will bring them into public space for collective problem solving. The task becomes one of finding a problem that is vital enough to attract immigrants, broad enough to bring people from different backgrounds, and manageable enough to achieve a measure of success and create momentum for further work together.

> "We can't change education levels, English language skills, and economic levels overnight. But we can change organizations to engage immigrants. Without these organizations, we can't have immigrant civic participation."
>
> Kien Lee, Senior Research Associate
> Association for the Study and Development of Community

CAPACITY

Importantly, civic participation strategies are designed to *build* capacity among the participants. Learning is central.

Through the experience of making and implementing plans together, immigrants educate themselves, developing skills and knowledge, building self-esteem, individual voice, and personal identity. As they learn, participants deepen their analyses of problems, sharpen and strengthen their strategies of solution. The group working this year to stop the closing of the local health clinic will be negotiating the budget with city council next year, registering voters and campaigning for statewide reform of health care delivery the next.

Leadership is among the most important of the capacities that are built. Specific leadership skills—public speaking, active listening, running a meeting—are developed through the "project-based," experiential learning of the civic participation itself. The best of the projects develop leaders who develop leadership in others.

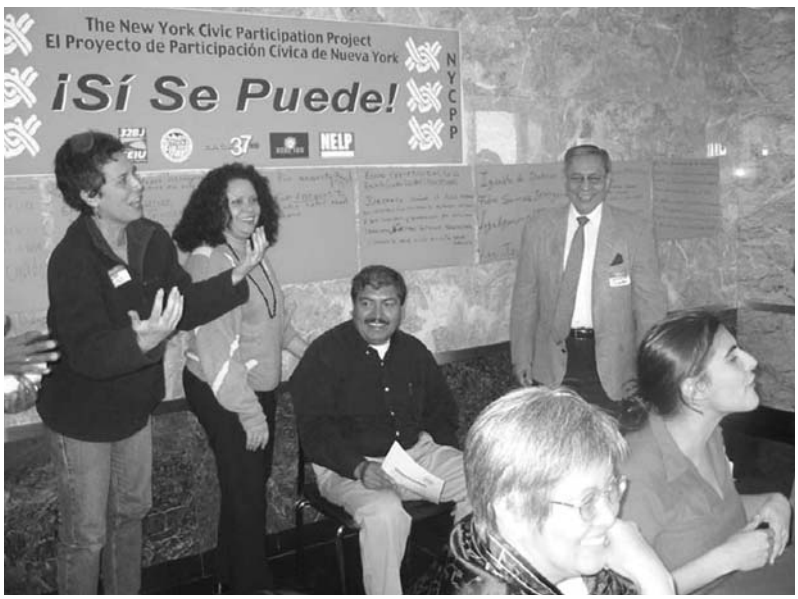
Civic participation also consciously builds collective community capacity among immigrants and other residents. The strengthening of networks of trusting relationships is both an implicit strategy and an explicit outcome of engagement.

NETWORKS OF RECRUITMENT

None of this could be accomplished without organizations and organizers devoted to engaging immigrants in civic life.

Jennifer Gordon, founding and former director of The Workplace Project[21] in Long Island, New York explains it this way: "Strong community-based organizing institutions...run effective campaigns that are derived from the concerns of immigrants, which are generated by reflection on life experience..."[22] The institutions are staffed by professional organizers who build relationships with immigrants and encourage them to learn through action, helping to develop consensus on problems and strategies, fostering and supporting newcomer leaders who will become the visible face and voice, the authentic owners of the work.

Based in community centers or churches, unions or worker centers, neighborhoods or broader communities, the institutions include nationally affiliated networks and locally created organizations. Some are ethnicity-centered, some not. Some blend the provision of services or advocacy with their civic participation work. All share a commitment to the engagement and empowerment of immigrants and others through collective problem solving in the democratic process.



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Chapter 3
Traditions of Participation: Community Organizing and Popular Education

Institutions that involve newcomers and other residents in civic participation draw upon the traditions of popular education and community organizing. Both employ experiential education and collective engagement toward systemic social improvement.

The heritage of popular education goes back to Nineteenth Century Europe, but its towering figures in the Twentieth Century were Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and American Myles Horton, who founded the Highlander Research and Education Center (originally the Highlander Folk Center) in Appalachia in 1932.

Highlander worked first in the creation of the labor movement and, two decades later, extensively with African Americans in the civil rights struggle. Rosa Parks attended Highlander before sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and it was Highlander that piloted the Citizenship Schools for literacy and voter registration. The institution is reaching out now to immigrants throughout the South.

Popular education views all participants as teachers and, as described in the Highlander mission statement, "brings people together to learn from one another," shaping "educational experiences that empower people to take democratic leadership towards fundamental change."[23] Drawing its curriculum from the daily lived experience of participants, popular education pursues what Freire called "praxis," a cycle of action-reflection-action. People develop their own paths through self-education, beginning with thematic investigations of the problems they face, followed by analysis to discover root causes of these problems and action to solve them.

RESOURCES

The Ford, Rockefeller, and Charles Stewart Mott foundations have supported *"Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South,"* a joint research project among Highlander, The Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis, and the Southern Regional Council. The project combines community-based research with popular education to investigate and influence changing racial dynamics as more immigrants enter the South. See the report *"The New Latino South: An Introduction,"* available at the Highlander Web site, **www.hrec.org**.

Community organizing's founding figure is Saul Alinsky, who pioneered its approaches in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood (Upton Sinclair's *Jungle*) beginning in the late 1930s. Seeking new strategies to counteract poverty and powerlessness, he started the Back of the Yards Council, drawing Lithuanian, Polish, Czech, Croat, and Serb immigrants into collective democratic activity across ethnic dividing lines as formidable in their day as any in our time.

The Council led to the Industrial Areas Foundation and helped to develop principles that eventually came to define community organizing: one-on-one relationship building, issue identification through mutual self-interest, leadership development through action and reflection, analysis of the networks of power that control decision making on specific issues, creation of community power in numbers and through "mediating institutions" such as the church, and negotiation with officials in position of political authority through public actions.

From these roots in Chicago, community organizing has developed many branches, including national faith-based and neighborhood-based networks and adaptations designed by newcomer communities themselves.

> "Saul Alinsky and I went on a circuit. We had the 'Alinsky/Horton show' that went out...debating and discussing the difference between organizing and education... Saul says that organizing educates. I said that education makes possible organization..."[24]
>
> Myles Horton, founder
> Highlander Research and Education Center

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Community organizing and popular education are more alike than not, and institutions employing the strategies share distinctive features. Here is a list of questions funders can ask in evaluating requests relating to immigrant civic participation:

1. If the foundation has an interest in categorical support to help move a particular issue, have the organization's immigrant members identified this issue as a priority?

2. Do mechanisms exist through which issue identification and strategy formulation originate among the immigrant members?

3. Does the organization have a democratic structure, with active members, committees, and leadership ladders by which immigrants can assume staff and governance positions?

4. Is the organization cultivating an active base of members through participation, rather than simply mobilizing large numbers of immigrants for rallies and other public actions?

5. Is participant leadership development a conscious goal?

6. Is there evidence of conscious attention to "learning by doing" and relationship building among members?

7. How far down into the grassroots does the organization's membership go?

8. If service delivery or advocacy are part of the organization's mission, are they being used as bridges through which to draw immigrants into democratic activity on their own behalf, or is staff simply "doing for" the newcomers as clients?

9. With its services, has the organization created relationships of trust and mutual reciprocity with immigrants?

POPULAR EDUCATION AND THE PARKS OF ARLANDIA

The immigrant members of the Women's Leadership Group of the Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee (TWSC) in Alexandria, Virginia came together regularly to discuss community concerns and the needs of women. Using a technique of popular education to bring issues to the surface, they drew pictures of community life as they experienced it. Catalina's drawing of her children playing in the street struck an immediate chord among the group and sparked conversation about the lack of recreational space for young people in their neighborhood.

With TWSC's encouragement, the women moved from problem identification to analysis and strategies that could lead to positive change. They decided to document the conditions, creating a map of all of the playgrounds and outside barbecue grills available to the 9,000 Arlandia residents. They found two of the former (both small), one of the latter. They made a similar map of adjacent, middle-class neighborhoods of single-family homes. The contrast was dramatic.

Next came research. The women studied the budget of the Alexandria Parks and Recreation Department; in the study they received support from TWSC staff, but the research was their responsibility. They found $75,000 that had been set aside but not yet used for tennis courts.

Armed with this information and their maps, the women sought a meeting with the Director of Parks and Recreation. As a result of their ongoing advocacy, over the next few years Parks and Recreation made more than $100,000 in improvements to Arlandia: a new playground, two new public grills, and a multipurpose playing court.

Chapter 4
Learning Together: Education Through Participation

Experiential learning through civic participation is a powerful form of adult education for newcomers, who often have had little exposure to formal schooling in home countries. Indeed, many immigrants, particularly those from Latin America and Africa, come to the United States well practiced in the traditions of popular education and organizing, ready to put them to use in their new communities.

Staff organizers provide guidance, and experts may be called in to share technical knowledge. The goal, however, is to produce skills and knowledge within the group.

Immigrant civic participants have the opportunity to practice important communication and interpersonal skills, including active listening, public speaking, consensus building, advocacy and influence, cooperation and teamwork. They also develop analytical skills such as research, problem identification and solution, planning and prioritization, budget and legal analysis, and the understanding of political power. These are the skills of the workplace, community life, and family life. They are building blocks for the full integration of immigrant families into American life.[25]

Popular education's creative, interactive exercises help participants build from their personal experience to broader and deeper analyses of social, economic, and political forces.

At the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in South Los Angeles, for example, residents map the location of banks, supermarkets, and other institutions in their neighborhoods in several Twentieth Century decades, analyzing patterns of institutional flight and community decay. At the Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California, also in Los Angeles, day laborers learn civics and English through a locally invented board game.

Community organizing tends to rely on regularly scheduled formal leadership training programs that teach interpersonal and political skills. Further education is integrated into local collective action. Research, for example, is sometimes practiced through scheduled appointments with public officials. Public actions are both strategies to win policy changes and milestones in experiential education; immigrants prepare to communicate and negotiate with officials on center stage in meeting rooms that can hold thousands of participating families.

> "Once the issue is identified by the people, the rest is easy. People are ready to be educated, ready to educate others."
>
> Gustavo Torres, Executive Director
> CASA de Maryland

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Although groups often self-identify as either community organizing or popular education institutions, many borrow, blend, and invent from both traditions. When evaluating the immigrant education components of civic participation proposals, here are some questions funders can ask:

1. How does the organization demonstrate its sensitivity to and strategies for "starting where the immigrants start" as it builds education into democratic participation?

2. What explicit skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors does the organization indicate it is trying to help immigrants develop? How does it describe the educational process, the experiential curriculum?

3. When speaking of the educational aspects of the work, some organizations will focus on leadership development. What specific skills and attitudes of leadership are they trying to instill?

4. How does the organization know it has been successful in its efforts to help immigrants build their human capacity?

5. What do immigrant participants themselves say about what they are learning, and how deep into the immigrant membership does this active learning go?

6. One experienced organizer describes the learning component of civic participation as "Think, Act, Reflect." Does good evidence exist that the organizers are not "doing the thinking for" immigrant membership, but rather actively engaging immigrants in thinking for themselves? How is the group evaluating its action and using the results of this reflection? What is the evidence that the reflection process is deeply engaging immigrant participants?

IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS THROUGH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

When Filipinas began to come forward to tell stories of wage and other abuse as domestic workers in New York City, CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities (also known as the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence) encouraged them and other members to explore the extent of the problem. They conducted outreach interviews with domestic workers in parks, on the streets, in churches. So began CAAAV's Women Workers Project.

The women did research into the history of domestic work and into relevant laws (like farm work, domestic work is not regulated by the National Labor Relations Act). Over a two-year period they partnered with students from the Immigrant Rights Clinic at New York University, drafted a set of standard guidelines for the industry, conducted vigils, collected thousands of petition signatures, created the Asian Women's Leadership Institute to educate domestic workers, and launched the autonomous Domestic Workers United union, including immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Women who earlier had been afraid to talk to anyone about their working conditions testified twice at hearings before the New York City Council. Their powerful stories compelled Council members to speak about their own domestic-worker grandmothers. The Council unanimously passed domestic worker guidelines, including notice of termination, sick days, severance pay, and paid vacation, as well as a bill requiring employers to sign a standard contract with placement agencies recognizing these rights. On June 3, 2003, Intro. 96-A, the Domestic Workers Bill, was signed into law by the mayor.

Chapter 5
Working Together: Civic Participation and Relationship Building

The networks of human relationships that constitute the social capital of a community can only be developed through shared experience, and civic participation provides the vehicle for immigrants to share experience with those from different backgrounds.

Building organizing projects across lines of ethnicity, among newcomers and the native born, strengthens the pluralism and enhances immigrant integration. This was one of the major findings of the Changing Relations Project, research into relationships between newcomers and established residents supported by The Ford Foundation in the early 1990s: "Grass-roots organizing is a useful approach in promoting opportunities for interactions among groups at the local level. 'Bottom-up' processes often work better than 'top-down' ones. Leadership training for community members should be encouraged."[26]

Organizers and popular educators emphasize that their work is "relational" in nature, that collective civic activity cannot be successful unless participants learn to know and trust one another.

Community organizers begin with "one-to-one" meetings among members and build from there to personal relationships within larger groups. Monica Hernández, who leads the Pueblos de Latinoamerica program at Highlander Research and Education Center, working to develop Latino grassroots leadership and organizations in the Southeast, describes Highlander's "commitment to create a space where people can share stories and experiences, to create an opportunity to connect, so people know that others are going through the same things, that they are not alone."

As a bridge to taking on civic campaigns together many organizations use social, recreational, or cultural events to begin building relationships (see Part III, Chapter 3, "What Art Has to Do with It," for a deeper discussion of cultural expression and exchange).

Civic participation engages diverse community members in working together in many ways:

- The "Tellin' Stories Project" in Washington, District of Columbia brings African American and immigrant parents together at their children's schools to share personal stories, making books and stitching "story quilts." As they get to know one another and become comfortable in the school setting, common issues surface—facilities, instruction, curriculum, homework—and the project encourages the parents to organize around these issues to make improvements in the school.
- Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, which engages members of small, low-income African American congregations in civic life, created the Antes Columbus youth soccer league to bring immigrant and African American families together, then got them working with one another to finance the construction of soccer stadiums in their neighborhoods.
- To bridge the gap between immigrants (Haitians, Hondurans, Jamaicans) and the low-income native-born, Florida ACORN in Miami began with a barbecue. When the children started playing with one another, the parents began to mix. Realizing they had shared concerns, they organized. In their first campaign together, they registered 15,000 people to vote for the 2000 election.

> "The problem with many traditional intergroup relations programs is that they bring people together to talk about intergroup relations—talking about what's different among them. To build relationships you want to focus on what's common, get people working together to improve quality-of-life issues they share."
>
> Karen Bass
> Former Executive Director, Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment
> Member, California State Assembly, 47th District

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Ethnic-specific organizing among immigrants is important in itself and is often a first step toward the empowerment that can lead to cross-cultural organizing. Sometimes a particular ethnic group predominates in a region. But all civic participation should develop relationships between immigrants and those in positions of power and authority in the community. Interethnic coalitions and campaigns remain an important goal.

Bridging ethnic differences through shared civic campaigns is never easy, however, and requires regular oversight by organizers. Here are some questions funders can ask in evaluating civic participation requests relating to intergroup work:

1. Does the organization have a mission and culture, demonstrated by action, that commit it to cross-ethnic work?

2. If the organization is ethnic-specific in its membership, does it aspire to or have a history of coalitional work with other immigrant and native-born groups?

3. If the organization is working in a multi-ethnic region or with a multi-ethnic population, is its membership roughly proportionate?

4. When several different immigrant groups and the native born are represented among the membership, is there evidence that each has equal access to power, leadership, decision making, and participation?

5. When immigrants have been incorporated into an organizing group that has been historically native-born in membership, are they being incorporated fully, with respect to issue campaigns, leadership development, and staff positions?

6. How do organizations handle language interpretation at their meetings?

7. How do organizations describe their strategies for dealing with interethnic tensions as they arise?

IMMIGRANTS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

When the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment was started in South Los Angeles in 1990 by Karen Bass, an African American who had grown up in the neighborhood, two things were clear. The Coalition wanted to build a base of membership through neighborhood organizing, knocking on doors. And they knew that the people opening those doors represented a dynamically changing demographic: long-time African American residents, joined by increasing numbers of newcomers, including Latinos from Mexico and Central America and blacks from Central America and the Caribbean.

The issue that first drew these diverse residents together—reduction in the number of "nuisance" motels and liquor stores in their neighborhoods—was yet further complicated by ethnic relations. At the time, many of the motels were owned by Pakistanis, many of the liquor stores by Koreans. Some black residents viewed Korean merchants as ruthless. (The then-recent killing of a young African American by a Korean merchant, and the subsequent acquittal of the perpetrator, had enraged the community.) Some Latinos who had been hired by local merchants felt exploited.

To get beyond emotion to analysis, beyond race to systemic issues, a great deal of education of the multicultural membership was necessary. Members studied the history of the neighborhood: as blacks had first entered South Los Angeles, it was their businesses that current residents wanted to close down. Latino workers were reminded that they were also exploited by Latino employers. Economic analysis enabled members to understand that a motel making a marginal profit might be tempted to rent rooms by the hour; a liquor store in a similar situation might be tempted to sell alcohol to minors.

Broad outreach and adaptability were also necessary. Before launching its campaign, to minimize ethnic tensions, the Coalition created a task force with Asian leadership in the city. The morning after the task force held its first meeting, Los Angeles erupted into the flames of civil unrest that followed the Rodney King verdicts. When the smoke had settled, the goal of the campaign had evolved into providing alternatives to rebuilding. Coalition members worked with owners and with the city to develop incentives, including the waiving of fees (as much as $100,000) for connection to the sewage system for liquor stores that reopened as laundromats.

Not every issue the Coalition has taken on has successfully drawn immigrants and African Americans together. And Karen Bass cautions that, even when the issue is right, constant attention must be paid to counter discriminatory attitudes. Latinos don't tend to think of Caribbeans as immigrants, for example; African Americans don't tend to think of them as blacks. As they work together, she says, "people need to learn the facts about race, racism, and demographics." These topics, along with economic and social analyses of Los Angeles, constitute the evolving popular education program that the Coalition couples with its organizing campaigns.

Chapter 6
Policy and Immigrant Participation: The Coin's Two Sides

Civic participation and policy matters interrelate. The desire to improve policy at the local, state, and federal levels draws newcomers into civic engagement, the pathway to integration into American democracy and society. And in and of themselves, policies can be either encouraging or discouraging to immigrant participation.

Relevant policies may be specific to immigration or immigrants (e.g., making driver's licenses available irrespective of legal status, which encourages integration; requiring the foreign-born from particular countries to register with the federal government, which discourages). Or they may target broader social concerns in which newcomers share interest, such as education, health, housing, and jobs.

Policy is politics, and the American arena for immigrant-related policy has always been complex, sometimes contradictory, often controversial. The "Americanization" movement in the early decades of the last century—in which the federal government joined with states, businesses, and community organizations to create English language, civics, and workforce programs promoting integration of that great wave of immigrants—was an uneasy alliance of protectionist and progressive forces. The fear of communism following World War I eventually helped to tip the movement toward a narrow and exclusive concept of integration.[27]

Our own era is an amplified echo of a century past. The increasingly smaller world in which we live has brought us conflicting demands: to integrate the diverse human and cultural assets of enormous demographic change as we protect the homeland from terror.

The effects have been both chilling and stimulating to immigrant participation. Haitian-born in Miami have been less willing to go public with stories of abuse, yet they have participated in campaigns to improve bus service, elementary school reading levels, and access to health care. Some South Asian-Americans in New York are fearful of using cell phones, yet people of Muslim, Arab, and South Asian background have become more politically aware and involved. Somali, Latino, and other immigrant civic leaders have been detained under the USA PATRIOT Act, yet newcomers from all ethnic backgrounds have joined the widespread debate on civil liberties sparked by the legislation.

In coalition with police forces around the country, cross-ethnic collaborations of newcomers have helped to pass local ordinances opposing the CLEAR Act, pending in Congress in 2004, which would require police to enforce immigration laws, potentially damaging their often-fragile relationships with immigrant communities and thus their ability to fight crime. On behalf of the DREAM Act, also before the 2004 Congress, as well as similar legislation in several states, immigrant high school students have testified in Washington, District of Columbia, and their state capitals to permit access to higher education through in-state tuition for undocumented youth.

Specific policy issues and pending legislation will come and go as the country seeks a seesaw balance between security and the integration of newcomers. For example, Congressional debate on the legalization of undocumented workers, silenced almost completely in September 2001, returned to life in late 2003.

> "At the dawn of the Twenty-First Century, the United States is revisiting a challenge from the dawn of the Twentieth Century—how to welcome, integrate, and make citizens of large numbers of new immigrants."[28]
>
> Ann Morse and Aida Orgocka
> "From Immigrants to Citizens: A Role for State Legislators"
> National Conference of State Legislatures

But the link between participation and policy is continuous in democracy, and the two-part case for immigrant engagement stands independent of the particular politics of the day: pursuit of the right to engage in policy making integrates newcomers and strengthens communities; policy that promotes and enables the responsibility of engagement integrates newcomers and strengthens communities.

TWO PROMISING POLICY EXPLORATIONS

The rights, responsibilities, and community benefits of immigrant engagement have informed two recent, promising policy explorations into newcomer integration.

Seeking to understand and promote the elements of successful integration, "Building the New American Community," a project led by the National Conference of State Legislatures and substantially supported by the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, started with important guiding principles of engagement: integration is a two-way process in which both newcomers and the receiving community benefit, and hence, immigrants and refugees should be involved in all project decision making.[29] Public-private coalitions were funded to explore strategies and identify systemic interventions to improve newcomer integration in Nashville, Tennessee; Lowell, Massachusetts; and Portland, Oregon.

Although the collaboration at each site developed a unique programmatic focus (workforce and business development in Nashville, leadership development and job access in Lowell, popular education and mentoring in Portland), all pursued immigrant civic participation as a primary vehicle for integration.

RESOURCES

The 2004 final report from the three-year "Building the New American Community" project—what did and did not work and why—is available at **www.ncsl.org/programs/immig**.

We the People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians, a report of California's Little Hoover Commission, is available at **www.lhc.ca.gov**.

The Web site of the Office of Human Relations of Santa Clara County, California, **www.immigrantinfo.org**, contains several reports of interest.

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Shared responsibility by newcomers and their receiving communities for newcomer community participation—and the shared benefits of this engagement—form a central theme of "We the People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians," published in 2002 by the Little Hoover Commission, a bipartisan, independent California agency that conducts research to advise the Governor and Legislature.[30]

The report establishes improved quality of community life as an important goal of immigrant integration, arguing for policy that, among other things, will "encourage immigrants to fully participate in their communities, be contributing community members, and become citizens." All immigrants would be so encouraged; in the course of its study, the Commission concluded that differences between documented and undocumented newcomers were "born of federal policies that undermine state and community priorities."

"A deliberate policy toward immigrants," the Commission wrote, "would improve the efficiency of public programs, clearly communicate public expectations for all residents, including immigrants, and remove barriers to self-sufficiency and self-governance."

These two explorations do not ignore the challenges that face policy development. Competing interests are inherent to immigration issues, and public debate on immigrant-related policy has always been freighted with contention. But for both newcomers and their receiving communities, the most productive space that immigrants and refugees can occupy is in the midst of the debate.

Participation Promoting Policy: the PICO California Project

Newcomers, one in four of California's population, have joined actively with the native born in the PICO California Project of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization, which draws together 17 PICO affiliates from throughout the state to add the voices and concerns of regular Californians to statewide policy improvement.[31] Organizing in more than 70 cities and over half of the State Senate and Assembly Districts, the California Project represents approximately 350 congregations and 400,000 families.

Each of the 17 PICO affiliates comprises a collaboration of congregations promoting civic participation. While continuing to work together locally on issues, through the California Project members collectively identify statewide concerns and develop skills and strategies to move policy in the state capital of Sacramento.

In 1999, health care bubbled up from members and coalesced for the Project. Increasing numbers of participating families lacked access to basic care and were among the seven million uninsured Californians. The health-care campaign was launched when more than 3,000 PICO members visited the State Capitol on May 2, 2000.

Since that time the statewide policy improvements in which PICO members played a role have included the following: the simplification of Medi-Cal reporting, bringing health coverage to 500,000 additional families and children; an increase of $50 million to build and expand community clinics; a commitment to use the $400 million annual state share of the tobacco settlement for programs in health care; a $10 million increase in annual funding for primary care clinics; and approval by the federal government of the state's waiver request to add 300,000 uninsured parents to the Healthy Families program.

In their separate education campaign, members of the PICO California Project helped to add $50 million to after-school programs in low-income California neighborhoods and won $30 million for the country's first teacher home-visit program. They worked with the State Treasurer to increase California's low-income housing tax credit by $20 million and, targeting 100,000 infrequent voters in a get-out-the-vote campaign, helped pass a statewide proposition for $2.1 billion to fund affordable housing.

To accomplish these goals, PICO California Project members have learned, among many other skills, how to develop and maintain strong working relationships with elected representatives on both sides of the aisle and at all levels of government.

Policy Promoting Participation: An Exemplary County

When the federal welfare reforms of 1996 eliminated most public assistance to legal permanent residents in the country, the Board of Supervisors of California's Santa Clara County, where 34 percent of the population is foreign-born and another 27 percent the children of these newcomers, launched its Citizenship Initiative.[32]

Two permanent positions were added to the Office of Human Relations. In addition to many creative strategies for replacing and restoring benefits to those affected, the County started a series of free Citizenship Days, reaching out to immigrants in 17 languages and, between 1997 and 2003, submitting more than 16,500 naturalization applications to the then Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).[33] When the local INS backlog on these applications became the worst in the nation, the County provided the office with nine clerical workers.

Support for much of the initial work came from a $1.2 million grant from the Northern California Citizenship Project, itself supported by the Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute and a number of foundations in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The County's immigrant integration work continued with a two-year assessment process, including surveys, focus groups, and participatory action research that engaged immigrants themselves. An immigrant summit followed, as well as further research and three County publications, producing hundreds of recommendations to improve immigrant lives and detailed information on newcomers from 16 countries of origin (the publications are available on the County's Web site, www.immigrantinfo.org).

Active outreach to encourage newcomer civic participation accompanied these efforts to improve services and enhance cross-cultural understanding. A 12-week County-sponsored course, the Immigrant Leadership Institute, trains immigrants how to gain access to power in their communities. Graduates of the program join the Immigrant Leadership Forum, created to enhance immigrant advocacy. In 2003 members of the Forum organized to help defeat California's Proposition 54, which would have made illegal the collection of data by race and ethnicity.

CHAPTER 7
Employing Participation Approaches: Foundation Initiatives and Evaluation

As foundations have created initiatives to promote newcomer civic participation and worked with evaluators to measure success, several have placed high value on grantee engagement, adopting civic-participation approaches in their funding initiatives.

To help build individual and institutional capacity, foundations have involved grantees in some or many aspects of program design. For example, the Immigrant and Refugee Leadership Development Initiative (IRLDI) of The Hyams Foundation (see sidebar on page 28) began with grantee organizational assessments and the development of individual grantee work plans. The IRLDI evaluation found that this process in itself developed capacity in participating organizations.

IRLDI brought together staff from six organizations representing four ethnic constituencies, encouraging cross learning and relationship building across lines of diversity. The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants (the Partnership) of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (see sidebar) convened immigrant leaders from 13 countries of origin to share cultural views of civic participation.

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Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations

Both IRLDI and the Partnership have placed an intentional focus on learning, embedding evaluation into their work and using feedback to adapt and evolve. Design of the second two-year phase of IRLDI was informed by the lessons generated in Phase I. From what they learned from one another, the Partnership's immigrant leaders created and constituted a council to strengthen immigrant participation in civic life.

The Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship (CVP), funded by The James Irvine Foundation from 1986 through 2004, also included these civic-participation characteristics. Before the first grants were made, Irvine supported the originating CVP organizations to collectively develop the goal of their collaborative work: build voluntary, self-perpetuating capacity in California's Central Valley for newcomer naturalization and full civic participation. Organizations shared their proposals with one another prior to submission, looking for collaborative opportunities.

CVP members—eventually some 14 organizations representing Latino, Southeast Asian, Indigenous Mexican, and other ethnic backgrounds—met quarterly, designing and implementing collaborative projects that included a small grants program supporting well over 100 diverse, grassroots civic participation projects; a fellowship program; an annual immigrant leadership award; and a Valley-wide Civic Action Network. CVP evaluators synthesized findings, made recommendations for improvement (including the establishment of the fellowship program), and helped to build the self-evaluation capacity of participating organizations.

In each of these initiative examples, foundations have worked with grantee organizations in the way that civic-participation organizations work with members, strengthening institutional and collaborative capacity through collective problem solving, within a framework of intentional learning toward the improvement of outcomes.

THE EVALUATION OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Intentional learning about the outcomes of civic participation itself—the evaluation of civic participation—is drawing increasing foundation interest. Several philanthropies have conducted evaluations, including the Woods Fund of Chicago, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, French American Charitable Trust, The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

RESOURCES

The *Community Organizing Toolbox*, an excellent philanthropic reference on evaluation and other matters, is available from Neighborhood Funders Group at **www.nfg.org**.

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform has been supported by the Bellsouth, Annie E. Casey, Edna McConnell Clark, Ford, Edward W. Hazen, Charles Stewart Mott, Needmor, William Penn, and Rockefeller foundations. See the program Web site, **www.crosscity.org**, for information on how to access its reports.

"Learning Together: Collaborative Inquiry Among Grant Makers and Grantees" discusses evaluation techniques that use civic-participation approaches. It is available from GrantCraft, a project of The Ford Foundation, at **www.grantcraft.org**.

In its review of a study by the Woods Fund, Neighborhood Funders Group's *Community Organizing Toolbox* highlights some of the measurement issues that evaluators of civic participation are exploring:[34]

- Identifying valid benchmarks for measuring the success of the organizing process.
- Supplementing membership numbers with measures to capture quality and intensity of participation, leadership numbers with measures of leadership quality and sophistication.
- Assessing the role played by organizing in achieving a particular change, as well as the depth of challenge faced and the impact made on participants, the organization, and the community.

One such exploration is being conducted by the Indicators Project on Education Organizing of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. This collaborative effort of funders, schools, community organizations, researchers, parents, and teachers is documenting "how the work of community organizing groups creates a process that leads from increased community capacity to improved student learning."[35]

The project, which focuses on improvement in schools through organizing in densely populated immigrant neighborhoods, has developed a "theory of change" describing the interrelationship of community capacity and school improvement through accomplishments in seven indicator areas: leadership development, social capital, community power, public accountability, school/community connections, equity, curriculum and instruction, and school climate.

More generally, evaluation of civic participation has concentrated on interrelated outcomes at four levels:

- ***Human Capital.*** The development of individual potential and leadership, with measures of acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- ***Social Capital.*** The development of networks of human and institutional relationships, with measures of depth, breadth, diversity, and durability.
- ***Institutional Capital.*** The development of democratic institutions, with measures of member ownership, participation in decision making, and governance.
- ***Community Capital.*** The development of positive community change, with measures of policies improved, systems and institutions made more accountable, problems solved or prevented.

The culture of learning through action and reflection, distinctively characteristic of community organizing and popular education, is a bedrock of strength, offering great opportunities for foundation/community partnerships that use civic-participation approaches in evaluation. For example, the Indicators Project on Education Organizing employs action research, the organizing and popular education tool that engages community participants directly in the study.

Philanthropy and institutions promoting civic engagement can ask and answer together the questions of formal evaluation:

1. What change are we trying to make, and why do we think it is important?
2. How are we trying to make the change, and why do we believe this is the best strategy?
3. How will we know whether we are accomplishing the change, so we can make improvements and we can best describe our work to others?

The civic-participation strategy of engaging institutions in the collective design and implementation of evaluation strengthens the organizations, the field of work, and the participating foundations.

The Immigrant and Refugee Leadership Development Initiative

The Hyams Foundation's commitments to immigrants and refugees go back to its origins in the 1930s, when one of the Hyams sisters started a settlement house in East Boston modeled on Chicago's Hull House.

Hyams developed the Immigrant and Refugee Leadership Development Initiative (IRLDI) with a special focus on immigrant communities within its Civic Participation and Community Organizing portfolio. The initiative's ultimate aim is "to build power among immigrants and refugees in order to improve the lives of immigrants in Boston through greater access to services, sustainable employment, affordable housing, and other areas critical to create a thriving community."

To reach this goal, IRLDI sought to build the capacity of immigrant-led organizations to strengthen leadership in immigrant communities. Civic participation is both an intended outcome and strategic approach of the initiative.

The initiative's guiding principles for participating organizations include the development of leaders committed to civic participation, broad demonstration of civic participation's benefits, inclusion in trainings of experiential opportunities to exercise leadership, involvement of emerging leaders in planning and implementation of projects, equal inclusion of participants from varying educational and economic backgrounds, and exploration of cultural barriers and opportunities to leadership development.

Similar principles guided the initiative's work with participating organizations. Building capacity through engagement, IRLDI asked each of the six original grantees, representing Chinese, Latino, Somali, and Vietnamese constituents, to develop its own capacity-building work plan involving board and staff members. Consultants, acting as organizers, facilitated this collective internal work, helping to build relationships, participation and ownership, modeling leadership development as staff and board leaders developed. The consultant-organizers played the same role in drawing the six organizations together for collaborative learning sessions.

IRLDI's first phase, from 2000 through 2002, focused on the internal leadership development and organizational change necessary to engage and build grassroots community leaders. In 2003, Phase II turned attention to constituent leadership development. Hyams, which has committed $450,000 to the initiative, is building from this experience to tackle a next challenge: the recruitment and retention of organizers of color.

The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region started the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants (the Partnership) in 1998 in response to rapid demographic change.

From 1970 to 2000, the foreign-born population of the Washington metropolitan area grew from 1 in 22 to 1 in 6, catapulting the region to the seventh largest immigrant community in America. These more than 800,000 newcomers represented 193 countries of origin; approximately one half arrived in the 1990s.

For many of the newcomers, few community organizations existed to assist in settlement, adjustment, and participation in civic life. Supported originally by the Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute, the Partnership focused on raising public awareness of the demographic changes and their policy implications; supporting naturalization; and strengthening immigrant organizations, leadership, and collaborative networks.

Employing multiple strategies, the Partnership has produced many accomplishments, including improved legal services for immigrants, upgraded technology in immigrant organizations, and assistance to more than 2,000 naturalizing citizens in a two-year period.

Importantly, broad outreach, diverse engagement, and shared learning—principles of civic participation—have characterized the Partnership in many of its dimensions. The initiative is guided by a coalition of corporate, government, and local foundation partners, who together have contributed more than $3 million to the effort; the Partnership also convened diverse immigrant leaders in a series of "learning circles" to inform its civic participation strategies.

Learning-circle participants created the Immigrant Empowerment Council, subsequently funded by the Partnership "to strengthen the capacity of immigrant communities to participate effectively in civic affairs that affect the quality of their lives, and to make institutions, systems, and the community-at-large more inclusive and responsive to all immigrants." The Partnership identified leadership development as a priority in 2003, supporting civic participation among day laborers to participate in decisions impacting their rights and ability to obtain work, among immigrant parents to advocate on educational issues affecting their children, among all newcomers to increase access to English language instruction and expand housing and economic opportunities.

CHAPTER 8
A Role for Philanthropy: Funding Needs and Opportunities

Foundations can accomplish many goals through the support of immigrant civic participation—stronger families and communities, improved policy and systems outcomes, integrated newcomers. Part III of this report will identify the institutions that foundations can support to achieve these aims, exploring questions of philanthropic approach. But funders can also play important roles to advance the field, as follows.

1. ***Ask current and prospective grantees how the demographics of their communities have changed, and whether and how they are working with newcomers.*** Demographic change has been so rapid that some organizations are still catching up. Institutions using participatory approaches can adapt them successfully to engage new populations.

2. ***Encourage and support grantees working with or among newcomer populations to use participatory approaches, moving from service delivery and/or advocacy to the authentic engagement of immigrant clients and program participants in their work.*** Engaging immigrants authentically in participation demands specific organizational capacity (see Part III, Chapter 7). But participation can start with volunteerism at the organization or in the neighborhood. Any effort that asks newcomers to involve themselves with others is a step in the right direction.

3. ***Encourage and support organizing and popular education groups to meaningfully improve their engagement of immigrants.*** Demographic change has been fueling these improvements for some time. Foundation grants can help promote the advancement of newcomers into positions of organizational leadership.

4. ***Fund peer-based cross-learning and capacity building for immigrant civic participation efforts.*** Exemplary organizations, some of them cited in these pages, are developing promising practices in the community. They can benefit from learning from one another and share their learnings with emerging groups.

5. ***Attend closely to opportunities created by changing policies and follow with targeted grantmaking to promote immigrant participation.*** For example, passage of federal legislation, such as AgJOBS and the DREAM Act, which include provisions for legalization of undocumented immigrants, would bring hundreds of thousands of newcomers out of the shadows and into bureaucratic systems to adjust their status. They will seek assistance from community organizations, and programs can be designed to encourage civic participation among immigrants at these first points of contact.

6. ***Seek opportunities to coordinate grantmaking with other foundations, with the goal of growing dense, interlocking networks of civic-participation leaders and institutions.*** Leaders and institutions take time to grow, as do their networks. The synergies of interlocking networks can both promote growth and strengthen outcomes. For instance, in the new gateway of North Carolina, where the immigrant population grew by 274 percent in the 1990s,[36] the Raleigh-Durham area has developed an extraordinary network in support of immigrant civic participation (see sidebar on pages 30 and 31).

While they no doubt will emphasize the organic nature of the change, several philanthropies, including the Mary Reynolds Babcock, Z. Smith Reynolds, and Warner foundations, have helped to make this growth possible with patient funding over time.

7. ***Encourage and support public institutions to promote immigrant civic participation.*** In most civic-participation efforts it is the participants who engage public institutions. But these institutions—whether at the municipal, county, or state level—also have the responsibility to reach out to immigrants for mutual community benefit. Such institutions include K-12 school districts, community colleges, adult education programs, local and county libraries, park and recreation programs, hospitals, community redevelopment districts, planning districts, police commissions, and citizen review boards.

8. ***Help raise the public visibility of and public support for the value of immigrant civic participation.*** Arguably and perhaps understandably, in the language they have chosen and the messages they have sent, organizations promoting civic participation have targeted progressive audiences. There is an opportunity as well as a need to broaden reach and build general public understanding. Foundations could consider support of communications projects, both at the organizational level and within the field at large.

9. Support non-partisan programs that encourage voter registration and participation and engage both those who can and cannot vote. Such programs are proliferating, and much is being learned. Chapters 2, 5 and 8 in Part III of this report offer examples, respectively, of faith-, labor- and community-based efforts.

10. Invest in the development of policies, such as public financing and non-citizen voting in local elections, which bolster newcomer political participation. Any policy that promotes grassroots political participation will open doors for newcomers. All policies that aim explicitly to open those doors, encouraging immigrants to become active in our democracy, are of value.

Networks in a

Enter the building at 201 West Main Street in Durham to learn how this area of North Carolina has handled the explosive growth of its immigrant population.

To the left of the expansive foyer is the three-year-old Latino Community Credit Union, community-owned and -controlled, with over 8,000 members, $12 million in assets, a statewide award for excellence, and a $1.3 million grant from the U.S. Treasury Department to open new branches.[37] Straight ahead is the bilingual police substation.

Turn right into the membership-based community organization El Centro Hispano (ECH), and across from the receptionist is an office of Durham CAN, the Industrial Areas Foundation's local faith-based organizing affiliate. Further along the side of a large and inviting space is the School District's Welcoming Center for non-English speaking students.

In the far corner, beyond the couches and congregating members, is the Café de Mujeres, where women are developing leadership skills through organizing on domestic violence issues. The office for Youth Leaders in Action is down the left wall. Signs around the room identify the English as a Second Language classes and the office for assistance in obtaining a federal tax identification number, necessary to open an account at the credit union or to obtain a driver's license.

To find the makeshift office of the new Latino Community Development Center, created to help other North Carolina immigrant organizations become membership- and civic participation-based and link them statewide, it's necessary to take the elevator to the basement.

A decade of networked leadership and institutional development is on display.

Kohar Ivan Parra, an immigrant from Colombia with an organizing background, led the transition of ECH from its 1992 founding roots in faith-based service delivery to civic participation. The ECH board hired Parra in 1996 and incorporated as a membership-based nonprofit in 1997. A crisis of robberies, assaults, and home burglaries in the immigrant Latino community spurred the transition. Interracial conflict infused the situation; the perpetrators were African American. ECH diffused the community anger (350 people came to the first meeting), organizing a series of forums with the police and City Council that led to the hiring of bilingual police officers, a victims' support group, and a bi-racial conflict resolution team.

The Latino Credit Union, when it opened in 2000, was a joint project of ECH and the African American-based nonprofit financial institution Self-Help. The Credit Union's first member made his deposit from a wheelchair; during the crisis, he had been shot and robbed of the $500 he was carrying.

One of the leaders who helped to bring Ivan Parra to ECH, John Herrera, an immigrant from Costa Rica, is a founder and the current director of the Credit Union. His civic participation began in the early 1990s with another project to integrate recent immigrants. From their living room, Herrera and his wife and a phone tree of over 300 volunteers organized the first Fiesta del Pueblo in 1994. It was to be a place for the invisible Latino population to become visible, for inter- and intra-cultural exchange to bloom: family-oriented, alcohol- and tobacco-free, with healthy recreation, food, music, dance, arts and crafts, cultural exhibits, community outreach and education.

11. Support programs that link newcomers interested in elected office with immigrant elected officials who can serve as role models. The influence exerted by pioneering leadership can be extraordinary (see Part III, Chapter 8), and targeted nonpartisan support by foundations can leverage this influence.

12. Fund research and support efforts to help the field find improved methods of evaluating the success of immigrant civic participation programs and strategies. In recent years, foundations have become more interested in research and evaluation, but their support has focused primarily on naturalization, registration, and/or voting rate. More support for research and evaluation—particularly participatory approaches—is needed to examine other pathways to civic and political participation.

New Gateway

Three thousand people attended the 1994 Fiesta—African Americans, Latinos, and Caucasians; rich and poor; politicians and business leaders. The 2003 attendance was closer to 50,000, and the Fiesta is now only one of many projects of its sponsoring organization, El Pueblo, Inc., incorporated in 1995. Statewide in its reach and led by executive director and former founding board member Andrea Bazan-Manson, El Pueblo has programs in leadership development, civic participation, youth leadership, health and safety, capacity building, and advocacy. Its first-ever Latino Day at the State Legislature in May 2003 drew 1,000 grassroots participants.

Other organizations have played distinctive roles in this growing institutional and leadership network.

The North Carolina Center for International Understanding (CIU) at the University of North Carolina, under the direction of Millie Ravenel, had been sponsoring international citizen exchange programs since 1979. Working with Herrera, Parra, and other Latino leaders, CIU created the Latino Initiative for Public Policy and Civic Leaders in response to the growth of the Latino population in the state.

Since 1998 the Initiative has been taking foundation, nonprofit, school, and policy leaders on educational visits to the communities of origin of the state's Mexican immigrants. A pre-departure workshop prepares participants for the weeklong tour, while a follow-up gathering provides an opportunity to reflect, share, and evaluate. The Initiative creates multi-disciplinary, diverse study teams of participants, including local Latino leaders to build relationships. A total of 145 leaders had participated in the program through 2003.

Although CIU does not claim sole credit for North Carolina innovations such as the Governor's Liaison and Advisory Council on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, the educational visits have been life-changing experiences for participants.

Perhaps the stories of most dramatic impact have come from neighboring Chatham County, where poultry processing plants have attracted large numbers of immigrant families, particularly to the Siler City area, with an elementary school population now over 60 percent Latino. Overwhelmed by the rapid change, County Commissioners sent a highly publicized letter inviting the then Immigration and Naturalization Service to deport undocumented immigrants.

The CIU organized a Mexico trip for Chatham County officials, following which the Chair of the County Commissioners publicly apologized for the letter. Shortly thereafter, when white supremacist David Duke held an anti-immigrant rally in Siler City, officials who had participated with CIU successfully helped to defuse the situation. Chatham County educators on a separate tour subsequently developed a statewide award-winning migrant education program.

Each of the leaders mentioned here—only a few among the hundreds who have helped to build North Carolina's infrastructure to promote immigrant civic involvement and inclusion—would be the first to downplay his or her personal contribution. All emphasize collective responsibility for positive change. All cite the critical support of North Carolina's foundations and the hard work ahead to extend efforts throughout North Carolina.

But the promising beginnings of similar institutions exist in other areas of the state and throughout the new gateways of the South, and the collective experience of leadership- and institution-building in North Carolina's Triangle Area offers much to learn.

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Part II.

Seven Stories of Newcomer Civic Participation

The stories in this section demonstrate how foundation investments in organizations using participatory approaches with newcomers can leverage great resources toward positive individual, institutional, and community change.

Learning How Democracy Works

Francisco remembers precisely the date of his arrival in the United States: October 16, 1994. It was, he says, the date of his rebirth. He left everything behind in his home country of Honduras, coming to this new culture for an opportunity to study and to support his family. Three years passed before he was able to bring his wife and children to join him.

Following jobs and better pay, he moved from Texas to Oklahoma to Louisiana and eventually Maryland. He was with General Motors for a time and is now putting his excellent carpentry skills to work as a day laborer. He has also become active in civic life with CASA de Maryland, a community organization that began in 1985 to provide services and advocacy for Central American refugees but which, according to its executive director, Gustavo Torres, was pushed toward civic participation by day laborers like Francisco.

Francisco has participated in campaigns to obtain driver's licenses and in-state college tuition for undocumented immigrants. Both of the issues matter to his family. He has been part of CASA's leadership and communication training classes, so that he can become an expert in testimony on pending legislation. He has learned how the legal system works and how to persuade legislators. Twice he has visited Annapolis to speak with his elected representatives.

> *"I want to learn more about how laws work, about how they are made. I want to help make things better in my community."*

Why does he take time to be an active citizen when doing so takes time away from his livelihood? Of course he doesn't want to lose any days of work, but, he says, it is also important to fulfill his responsibilities in civic participation. He wants to learn more about how laws work, about how they are made. He wants to help make things better in his community.

The key to everything at CASA, says Gustavo, is that the staff listens to Francisco and other grassroots leaders. Gustavo had a dream about pursuing housing and health issues, but the workers said no, voting instead for driver's licenses. Coalescing around the issue, the day laborers collected 20,000 petition signatures and presented them to the Governor. Once the issue is identified by the people, Gustavo says, the rest is easy. People are ready to be educated, ready to educate others.

Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee, © Rick Reinhard

Building Voice, Going Everywhere, Doing Everything

With her husband and their 11 children, Fadumo was able to slip across the border from civil war-ravaged Somalia to Kenya in 1991. Sponsored by a niece and brother in San Diego, their family was among the lucky ones; they spent only a year in a refugee camp, arriving in the United States in August 1992. Seeking good jobs and education for their children, they moved three years later to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where a sizeable Somali population was growing. (The 2000 Census counted over 11,000 Somali in Minnesota, most in the Twin Cities area.)

Fadumo's husband became a bilingual teacher, and she took work in the Somali nonprofit service sector, eventually holding two jobs. With the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota, she did outreach as a health worker with Somali women elders. With Way to Grow, her outreach was as a translator to help families with young children navigate the public school system.

Fadumo's transition from service to civic participation began in the post-September 11 environment with the help of two organizations. VOICE for Community Power, which had grown from an intergroup relations initiative sponsored by The Minneapolis Foundation and originally funded by the Ford and Mott Foundations, was establishing itself as an incubator for civic engagement of immigrants. The Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) had been training new community organizers since 1993, using a six-month paid apprenticeship model with mentors at community organizations. Beginning in 2000, OAP provided training retreats for organizing among VOICE's diverse multi-cultural constituency, including Latinos, Hmongs, and Somalis.

> *"Before I was shy and scared, but this helped me to build my own voice. I can go everywhere now."*

© VOICE for Community Power

Fadumo became an OAP intern as the Somali community, sponsored by VOICE, began a Voter Participation Campaign for the 2002 elections. She learned how to do one-on-one meetings, building individual relationships and uncovering the issues that mattered to Somalis. She learned how to help people research these issues and develop solutions that came from the community. She learned how to hone public messages, analyze political power, and participate in the public arena. She knocked on doors and registered Somalis to vote in front of malls and mosques. "Before I was shy and scared," she says, "but this helped me to build my own voice. I can go everywhere now."

The Somali Voter Participation Campaign reached a peak on October 19, 2002, when over 300 people attended a community meeting to which they had invited Senatorial candidates Paul Wellstone and Norm Coleman. The meeting was conducted in Somali, with English translation. It was designed to develop accountable relationships with both candidates. Each was asked separately to commit publicly to work with the Somali community on five issues, including affordable housing, education, employment, the deportation of Somalis after September 11, and the establishment of a continuing relationship with Somalis in the Twin Cities. On the dais was Fadumo, who made the public introduction of Senator Wellstone.

The Voter Participation Campaign was judged a great success among people who had not had free elections in their home country since 1968. The participation of Somali women was particularly important, and Fadumo has changed the way she works with women since the campaign, helping them to educate themselves now, to bring their voices out into the community. She has started a Somali girls group to reach the young. "We women are hungry to bring Somali power to the community; we realized that we did not use our power back home," she says. "Here we can do everything that women do in this country."

People Taking Power for Change

Fleeing the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Thoul's family spent three years in Thailand refugee camps before arriving in America. He was eight when they reached the Bronx, and life was difficult for the family, which supported itself for a decade doing garment work at home. When pricing for their products—scrunches and headbands—became diluted, Thoul took part-time factory work on the weekends.

One summer after high school he answered an add from an organization called CAAAV (the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence) to tutor Southeast Asian youth. It was the summer of the signing of welfare reform legislation. "Boom!" said Thoul. Suddenly, facing the loss of benefits, the community was alive with interest and fear.

Thoul and his colleagues at CAAAV started by doing outreach and information sharing. But they soon realized that there was greater potential power in encouraging collective action, in working hand in hand with residents. Thoul called it a "two-for-one deal." This was an issue that could be worked on strategically, as well as something that was owned by the community. Only if the issue had connection to the community was it possible to involve people in civic activity, to help them build their leadership skills. And that was the key: people taking power themselves to make change.

Welfare reform helped Thoul and others at CAAAV to build the Youth Leadership Project (YLP), whose members work to engage the community around issues that matter. Addressing the economic conditions that underlie welfare programs, YLP, for which Thoul does program coordination, has helped to start both a sewing and a catering cooperative among adults in the Bronx.

> *"Welfare reform...was a two-for-one deal. We had an issue we could work on and that community members could be attached to."*

Responding to high drop-out rates, the summer tutoring project has evolved into a program in which young people do research on curricula and work directly with the elementary schools to help them improve. Other issues have arisen, such as the 2002 repatriation agreement with Cambodia that added Cambodian legal residents to the list of those deportable for criminal activity.

Thoul says that building trust for youth leadership among Cambodian and Vietnamese adults in the Bronx was difficult at first. Southeast Asian cultures put value on the wisdom of age and experience. But they were able to work through the challenges of establishing intergenerational relationships, and encouraging civic participation among young people has become a conscious strategy at CAAAV. The Thouls of the community are the majority of the population, the bridge builders, the translators, and they can help their parents' generation to build a life that honors the home culture while creating a new culture in America.

Dignity Through Leadership

The civil war in Guatemala brought Victoria to the United States in the early 1980s. Some of her cousins had been "disappeared." The small business she owned was robbed and forced to close, and there were no jobs. When friends invited her to accompany them north, she did not hesitate. On the eight-day bus trip to Texas, they shared five meals; Victoria's first American food across the border virtually exploded from her stomach.

She and her friends had enough money to take a train to Boston, where a month later Victoria received word from Guatemala that her father had passed away. She got a job cleaning, and in the 23 years she has since been at this work Victoria has experienced most of the injustices that imaginatively unscrupulous employers have been able to dream up. One company fired all of its immigrant workers on the day before their first-year anniversary on the job, just as they were about to earn vacation benefits. When a new cleaning contractor took over at the clinic where Victoria worked, everyone's hours were cut to three a day; when the workers objected, they were let go.

Throughout 20 of these years of work, Victoria's union was of little help to her. All of that changed when Service Employees International Union Local 254, which had been known for its corruption, was put into trusteeship. Under new leadership, SEIU opened itself to democratic participation internally and to new external partnerships with the wider community. Victoria, now a janitor at Harvard University, participated in the successful living-wage campaign on campus, working with student activists and gaining courage to lift her voice. "Just because we clean the bathrooms," she says, "doesn't mean we should be treated without dignity."

Victoria has now taken her courage and skills out into the wider community. When, after five months of meetings, surveys, and debates, the union membership voted overwhelmingly to create committees on education, immigration, community involvement, and political participation, Victoria was selected to take the lead on the union's work in the local and state political process. All of the committees are vehicles to build bridges between workers' lives on the job and their civic lives in the community.

The physical manifestation of this goal is the very new 501(c)(3) worker center the union has created, the Voice and Future Fund, assisted by a major grant from The Hyams Foundation. Here rank-and-file members come to learn English and computer skills, leaders forge new relationships and coalitions with community-based organizations, and Victoria and her committee members develop strategies to elect local and statewide candidates who will govern for everyone in the state, including its growing immigrant population.

> *"Just because we clean the bathrooms doesn't mean we should be treated without dignity. The more skills I got, the more courage I had to speak out."*

From Social Programs to Systemic Change

Born in Oaxaca, Leo entered the United States with his parents and two siblings in 1989, when he was 10 years old. He celebrated his 11th birthday—and the next several—working with his family in the fields of the Idaho onion harvest, where they could together make $100 a day. His schooling was of first importance to his parents, but very difficult for him. He was held back two years, largely, he feels, because he was short. But he was also painfully shy; his eyes would water under the least amount of stress.

Looking back, Leo feels these extra two years of primary school were the best thing that could have happened to him, for they helped him solidify his English. He became more active in junior and senior high school, as his parents "indoctrinated" him in the importance of education. He remembers his dad almost crying, lecturing Leo on his studies.

Community service and leadership opportunities followed, and Leo credits these activities with helping to open him to a broader world. One of the privileged sons and daughters of farmworkers to enter Boise State University, he and classmates in the campus Latino club initiated community service projects, including "Trick or Eat" Halloween, collecting canned food for the farmworker population.

> *"I'm a product of government social programs—they helped me to learn to use a full set of silverware at restaurants...but we have to use activism to really change our own lives and the lives of others."*

© Idaho Community Action Network

But in these years Leo began to understand that, as indebted as he was to the social programs that had helped him advance as a student, service to farmworkers was not enough. Systemic changes were necessary to make real changes in lives, and these could be achieved only through collective civic activism. A statewide campaign had begun to raise the minimum wage for farm workers. In it Leo saw an issue that went to the heart of his family's experience, and he joined with the coalition of organizations, including the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN), engaged in the struggle.

He developed his leadership and public speaking skills and, realizing that his voice could carry the authenticity of a life in the fields, became a young spokesperson in the campaign. It took four years of the work of many farmworker civic participants and community organizations, but the minimum wage bill passed in Idaho.

Not every campaign has yet been as successful. But Leo, a senior now at Boise State, is working to develop student leaders who will take his place on campus, as he begins a staff position as an organizer with ICAN, drawing other immigrants into active civic participation to improve conditions in their communities.

Being Faithful to the Struggle for Empowerment

Ernest grew up in poverty in Trinidad Tobego. He was raised by his mother, who sold magazines, books, and floral arrangements. Fortunately, he says, he took to learning. A member of an earlier generation of immigrants, he came to the United States in 1967 with $300 US dollars and a passport to attend Howard University, never intending to stay.

It was a time of struggle for civil rights in America, and seeing people of color as minorities did not sit well with a young man from a country where blacks held power. One of his earliest impressions is of a visit to campus by Stokely Carmichael, himself a Trinidadian, who set a shining example of activism. Ernest made a vow to himself to be faithful to the struggle for empowerment.

He continued his education, and a job with Citibank eventually took him into the Flatbush community in Brooklyn. Flatbush had been a haven for Caribbean immigrants, who worked harmoniously but not politically with African Americans. As Haitian refugees began entering, the mix became more complex. Ernest became Vice President of the new Caribbean Action Lobby in New York, encouraging permanent residents to become citizens. His ultimate goal, though, was to elect people of color to local office.

In the early eighties Ernest was instrumental in creating the Greater Flatbush Independent Democratic Club, the goal of which was to engage people of color in the political process. In 1989 the first Jamaican-American, a woman, was elected to the city council. Since then, Caribbeans have held office at the district level, the State Assembly, and the State Senate.

Ernest believes that his early cultural upbringing in Trinidad predisposed him to a civic life that included the political arena. His were a people moving out from under colonial rule. Immigrants from other countries, he knows, bring their own cultural predispositions.

Now Vice President and Community Relations Director for Citibank in Washington, District of Columbia, Ernest, in a program sponsored by The Community Foundation of the National Capital Region and facilitated by the Association for the Study and Development of Community, has been learning about views on civic participation from newcomers representing many different cultures. The experience has attuned him much more to the nuance of approach to collective action for people from different parts of the world—and to the reluctance toward civic participation by immigrants who experienced repression in their countries of origin.

Still faithful to the struggle for empowerment, Ernest is putting to active use this growing understanding of what might inhibit or accelerate activism by people from different backgrounds. President of the Immigrant Empowerment Council, formed by the newcomers who have been learning from one another, he is providing leadership for programs aimed to increase the diversity of civic engagement by immigrants and refugees in the Washington metropolitan area.

> *"We [at the Immigrant Empowerment Council] don't want to be pigeon-holed into anything other than immigrant civic participation... If you are silent, you are feeding into the oppression."*

Women, Culture, Activism

Oralia, an indigenous Mixteca from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, arrived in California's Central Valley in 1998 with a visa to do health care outreach to immigrant women through Frente Indigena Oaxaquena Binacional (Frente), a binational community-based organization working with indigenous people in Mexico and the United States. Spanish, if they know it at all, is a second language for the indigenous from southern Mexican states. They live with discrimination in their home country, and as the most recent wave of migrant workers to America, they face unique challenges and special hardships here.

In Oaxaca, Oralia had been a *promotora* with the state's Education Department, teaching pregnant women about early child development. She had also volunteered with Frente, helping women to develop a small credit union and to learn basic finances and human rights. So she was well prepared for her job in the Central Valley. But she was less prepared for the overwhelming diversity of the Valley's immigrant population. She had grown up thinking every person with Asian features was from China. Here were Hmongs, Laotians, Cambodians. She wanted to learn to know them.

Oralia's opportunity came when the American Friends Service Committee's Pan Valley Institute (PVI), which uses popular education to connect and empower immigrants and refugees, invited her to a meeting of women from other ethnic backgrounds. In addition to Southeast Asians, there were Central Americans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans. At the meeting, using simultaneous translation equipment, they set two goals: to offer immigrant women better opportunities to develop and exercise leadership roles, and to broaden their circle, establishing relationships among ethnic groups to collaborate in common struggles as newcomers.

To negotiate cultural differences, they began by sharing cultural practices with one another, displaying traditional clothing and describing ceremonial and celebratory customs, telling their personal stories. "Cultural sharing is an important element to build trust," says Oralia. It enabled the women to identify what they had in common across backgrounds of origin and to begin discussing their shared experiences as immigrants.

> *"Our dream was to create a space where we could talk about culture and traditions, and then we could talk about politics and what we can do together to change our communities."*

From the shared experiences came collective analyses of the problems that held them back from leadership roles—the learning of English by those who had emigrated as adults, the lack of affordable child care, long hours at hard work, domestic violence. They brainstormed solutions and educated themselves about the political process and how they could have a voice in decision-making that affected their lives.

To solidify relationships and advance their agendas, they took on projects together. First was the production of a calendar, each month highlighting one woman's story, cultural roots, and experience as an immigrant or refugee. The calendar led them to a more ambitious publication, *Immigrant Women: A Road to the Future*, a "memory book" to document their work together, tell the stories of their homelands and journeys to America, and "create an educational tool that will facilitate our attempt to take part in the decision-making process."[38]

Oralia's dream throughout her cross-ethnic work on various projects has been "to create a space where others can not only talk about their cultures and traditions, but where we can talk about what we can do together to change the community and participate in politics." "I am very pleased to participate in this project," she writes in *Immigrant Women,* "because it will bring to light not only the problems we face as women, but also the activities in which we are engaged to overcome these problems. I am pleased to have opened my horizons to activism where I can express and carry out my ideas."[39]

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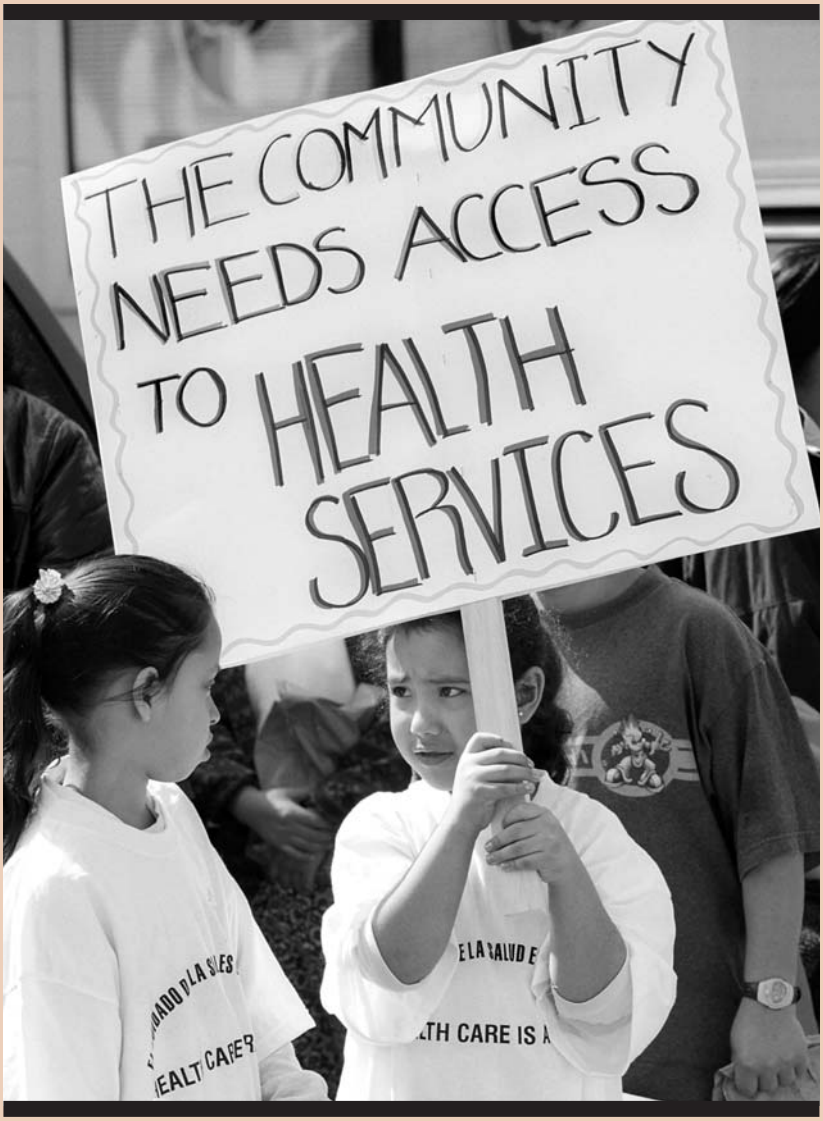


Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee, © Rick Reinhard

Part III.

Pathways to Civic Engagement

Strong, diverse civic-participation institutions are necessary to engage newcomers in community and political life.

CHAPTER 1
Naturalizing into Full Citizenship

Some naturalization programs stop with democracy's textbook version. But not all.

Given a recent boost by federal English Literacy-Civics funding, through which Congress has provided $70 million annually since 2001, a growing number of programs are using civic participation to integrate English literacy, civics education, and naturalization assistance. The goal is to develop new citizens who will play active roles in community and democratic life.

In New York, using "participatory literacy" approaches that find their roots in popular education, immigrant students from various adult English classes have written to their senators to protest program cuts, spoken before City Council, and circulated petitions about pending changes in rent policy.[40]

Such programs are relatively rare, and newcomer demand for English classes of any kind greatly exceeds supply. A recent study by the New York Immigration Coalition, for instance, found 50,000 classes available for one million immigrants in the state. The economic downturn has exacerbated the shortages.

Nevertheless, exemplary participatory projects exist (see sidebar on page 45), and several organizations, including The Aguirre Group in California and the New England Literacy Resource Center, have developed curricular materials and/or trainings.[41]

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN PROGRAMS

1. Does the program promote "experiential," "participatory" learning, in which classroom lessons are linked with community activity?

2. Does the program employ cooperative learning, treating the classroom as a mini-community, creating teamwork that models collective civic activity?

3. Does the program help students to think critically about events in civic life and focus on "learning how to learn," encouraging English practice in the community?

4. Does the program foster students' exploration and articulation of their personal identity as a foundation for civic engagement?

5. Does the program have the recently naturalized share their experience in what it takes to satisfy Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service examiners?

6. Does the program put volunteer immigrant teachers to use, including those recently naturalized and/or the children of naturalizing parents, continuing the circle and reinforcing the naturalization process in the community?

7. Does the program have an acceptable success rate among its students in achieving naturalization? (The rate will be dependent upon English skills of entering students but should be above the national average of 55 percent, with increasing success over time.)

> "Most of what is taught in this country under the category of 'immigrant civic education' is geared towards helping immigrants to pass the citizenship test, assisting them in the mechanics of the citizenship application, and registering them to vote. These programs focus on the design of our political system, emphasizing a textbook version of democracy: how the people elect the president, how a bill becomes law, how the protections of the Constitution work. They do not explore the problems with our governmental and the electoral systems, nor do they provide immigrants with opportunities for political action beyond voting."
>
> Jennifer Gordon
> "The Campaign for the Unpaid Wages Prohibition Act"[42]

PREPARING FOR FULL CITIZENSHIP

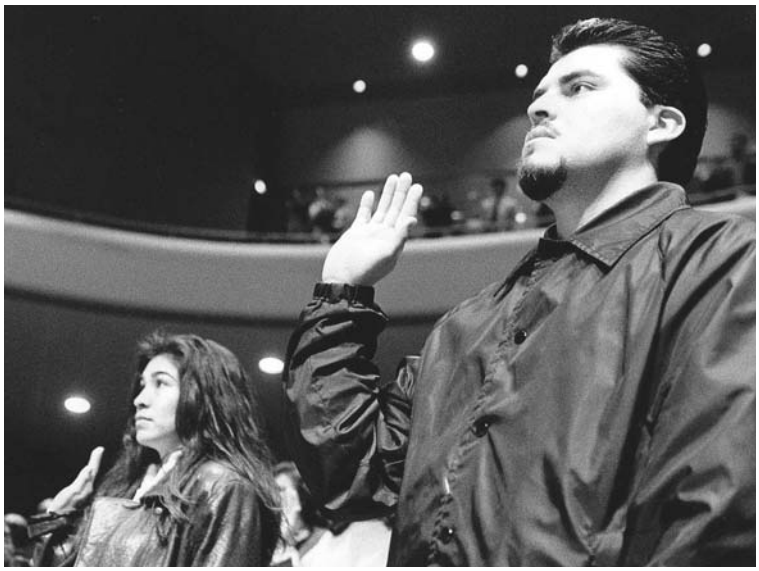
When, in October 2001, the local Sacramento representative of the then Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agreed to hold naturalization interviews in community churches to create a more familiar and stress-free atmosphere for applicants, the several hundreds of people filling the church hall stood up to cheer.

It was an assembly of the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC), a faith-based community organizing institution affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and the campaign to win this commitment from the INS had been months in the making. There were Caucasians, African Americans and Latino immigrants in the crowded room. Many of the immigrants were citizens, many not. But for some in the crowd, the INS campaign was an integral part of the SVOC-sponsored naturalization curriculum in which they were participating at the time.

They were members of SVOC's Active Citizenship Campaign (ACC), which combines community problem solving and leadership development with English language training and preparation for the naturalization exam. Through the years, in addition to meeting with INS officials to win the 2001 campaign, ACC students have testified at City Council and Board of Supervisors meetings on the need for affordable housing, registered voters at the California State Fair, and participated in Get Out the Vote campaigns in targeted precincts, working with the California Institute for Rural Studies to evaluate their success.

The civic campaigns are built around interests identified by the naturalizing students. In 2003, students selected the issue of obtaining drivers licenses for immigrants lacking proper documents. They met with State Senator Gil Cedillo and invited him to speak at a local church about the issue. In their English class they developed and practiced the questions they would ask the Senator about pending state legislation he had sponsored.

Graduates must learn English and pass the oral and written exams to become citizens, and ACC's naturalization rates, which have approached 90 percent, have been well above the national average of 55 percent. In addition, very importantly, these new Americans continue to participate actively in civic life.



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CHAPTER 2
Congregations and Civic Life: Faith-Based Community Organizing

An institutional port of entry for immigrants to the United States, religious organizations are trusted public space with familiar systems of value and ritual, where relationships can be formed and civic activity encouraged. Not every religious tradition—nor every church, synagogue, or mosque—engages its congregants actively in the broader community. But organizers in search of newcomers to attract into civic participation will find them in congregations.

Several community organizing efforts that grew from the original Alinsky Chicago model adopted the church as the societal "mediating" institution in which to ground their work. Religious organizations have a values base to undergird and guide democratic action; they hold positions of moral and political authority in their communities; they are membership-based.

A growing movement of separate nationwide networks, faith-based organizing includes the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the Gamaliel Foundation, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), Direct Action Research and Training Center (DART), and Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations Training Center (RCNO). Each is a multi-site network of locally networked congregations (and sometimes schools and unions), consisting of 20 to 40 or more multi-denominational religious institutions in each community. Together they include at least 134 local affiliates and over 4,000 member organizations, with combined individual membership of more than one percent of the U.S. population.[43]

As numbers of immigrants and refugees in congregations have increased across the nation, faith-based organizing has offered them an avenue into civic engagement. Latinos comprise the majority of participants, but people of Asian, Arab, African, Eastern European, and Caribbean backgrounds are represented in increasing numbers. Incorporating newcomers into their membership, faith-based organizing networks have learned how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds; newcomers, for their part, are reinvigorating and reshaping faith-based organizing.

Some network affiliates have partnered with legal service institutions, offering immigration advice as a draw into engagement. Some have begun to adopt immigration issues as concerns around which to organize immigrants and refugees, at times moving from local and regional to statewide campaigns as a result. One entire network (see sidebar on page 47) has lifted its sights to the national level. As democratic institutions, the faith-based organizing networks are adapting as they draw new Americans into the democracy.

RESOURCE

Interfaith Funders, a collaborative funding network, has produced several publications on faith-based organizing. The network includes, among others, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Jewish Fund for Justice, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, and, as associate members, the C.S. Mott Foundation, Needmor Fund, and New York Foundation. For information, contact director Jeannie Appleman at **interfaithfunders@yahoo.com**.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Foundations have been historically shy of seeking partnerships with religious institutions, but faith-based organizing is about democratic participation, not proselytizing or indoctrination. Networks of congregation-based organizing, extending across the country, offer broad access to funders with interest in engaging newcomers in the democracy.

> "I became active as a parent; I didn't agree with the reading program at the school. We had classes on parent civic participation in the schools. We have a lot of parents active now."
>
> Jessica Welch, Immigrant from Panama
> Member of the Community Action Project
> Brooklyn affiliate of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization

Here are some questions to ask when considering investments:

1. Are immigrants integrated into most or all of the organization's campaigns, working with the native born? Are native-born members integrated into campaigns on immigrant-related issues?

2. Are newcomers in positions of leadership and governance? Does the staff include organizers of immigrant or refugee background?

3. Can the organization articulate its strategies for outreach to immigrants and refugees? What has it learned about attracting newcomers? What groups has it failed to reach, and why?

4. How does the organization describe the ways it has changed internally in order to integrate newcomers into membership?

The Gamaliel Foundation: From Milwaukee's North Side to Rolling Thunder

When Gamaliel organizer Ana Garcia Ashley arrived in Milwaukee in 1992, her charge was to expand Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH) from its congregational base in the city's predominantly African-American North Side, to the south, historically white and traditionally separated, but where increasing numbers of Latino immigrants were settling and increasing numbers of Catholic churches were filling with immigrant congregants.

The work was slow and challenging. Many black members had never before met an immigrant. There was a need to develop relationships, to humanize immigrant concerns and connect them to those faced by African Americans.

Quality-of-life issues formed the focus of the first joint campaigns. Housing conditions were a common concern, and the beginnings of solidarity were built by collective victories to pass an ordinance improving housing standards and to increase access to home loans. Together immigrants and African Americans began to take on explicitly immigrant issues. A successful campaign increased services at the local office of the then INS.

Perhaps the campaign that marked the turning point for solidarity, though, was the Arnoldo Gomez story.

Gomez, a legal permanent resident who immigrated from Mexico in 1971, a husband and father and homeowner, pled guilty in 1997 to his first criminal offense, Driving Under the Influence. When his six-month sentence was served, the INS, acting under the 1996 changes in immigration law, placed Arnoldo in deportation proceedings. He was kept in jail for four years while MICAH and others campaigned for his release (the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals freed him in July 2001).

Arnoldo Gomez put a human face on immigration issues and embodied a growing realization among MICAH's African American and Latino members that this was a new arena of human rights, around which black and brown people must unite. MICAH now has an immigration committee that is working for a national legalization law.

At about the time Ana Garcia Ashley was reaching out to Latinos in South Milwaukee, Spanish-speaking churches began to appear in the suburbs of Minnesota's Twin Cities. Gamaliel had launched a strategy to think regionally, linking inner-city and outer-ring suburban issues, and its Twin Cities network, ISAIAH, established relationships with the immigrant congregations as they grew. The first campaign tapped into federal lead abatement monies to train immigrants for higher-paying jobs.

By the close of the 1990s members of ISAIAH's immigration committee had organized a civil rights campaign against the local INS that brought to their action Senator Paul Wellstone and Bill Yates, the INS second-in-command from Washington. For two weeks, four nights a week, immigrant civic participants practiced for the meeting, doing research and role plays. They won eight of their nine demands, filling the pews with supporters while, ringed by powerful allied local leaders, they negotiated in a small cloister adjoining the church.

Additional ISAIAH immigrant civic participation campaigns have followed, as they have for MICAH. And during these years, leaders from MICAH, ISAIAH, and other Gamaliel affiliates have taken immigrant organizing concerns to successive national assemblies of the full Gamaliel network.

A Spanish-language track of the Gamaliel leadership training institute was initiated, and at its 2002 National Leadership Assembly, Gamaliel adopted a first-ever network-wide national campaign for the Civil Rights of Immigrants. Embedded in "Rolling Thunder," a campaign named after a similar effort in South Africa, the work will eventually involve all 50 of the network affiliates and engage immigrants, as well as native-born, from diverse ethnic backgrounds at the local, state, and national levels, pursuing policy reforms while increasing the immigrant vote and promoting broad immigrant participation in the political process. If Rolling Thunder gathers the momentum its initiators intend, faith-based immigrant civic participation will reach a new level of inclusion and intensity.

CHAPTER 3
What Art Has To Do With It: The Role of Cultural Expression and Exchange

Civic participation approaches through the arts and humanities play important roles in immigrant integration. In drawing diverse peoples into collective action, art is a particularly powerful vehicle for turning communities into places of learning.

Through art we—regardless of where we were born—express our understandings of the world, interpret the experiences of others, and create new understandings. By rooting us to our heritage, culture supports our journeys into a broader world. Cultural exchange connects us to one another, enabling interpersonal communication and providing insight into the universals we share.

Community-building arts and cultural expression have a long history associated with civic participation in our country. For starters, think of the movement for African American civil rights.

RESOURCES

Creative Community: the Art of Cultural Development, a report from the Rockefeller Foundation's Partnerships Affirming Community Transformation, provides an overview of the field. The report and other related resources are available at **www.rockfound.org**.

Connecting Californians: Finding the Art of Community Change, a collaborative inquiry into the role of story in strengthening communities, is available at **www.communityarts.net/concal**.

Art and culture accompany immigrants and refugees to their new country, providing both a secure base and strong support for the enormous transition that integration entails. Immigrant parents preserve their culture of origin to keep it alive in the experience of their children. Throughout the history of immigration to America, such has been the case.

But preparation, performance, and celebration not only transmit values and traditions across generations; they also enable immigrants to create dialogue and build bridges to those of different cultural backgrounds.

> "It's like a tree. The history of my people, the traditions, my parents are the roots, they make me who I am. Reaching out through the branches, others can understand me, know who I am, not just what I do. And I need to understand their roots, everything behind them in order to know them. Expression through art is a way of attracting people, pulling them together and opening up the connection. It starts with the relationships, then they are empowered to move to common actions."
>
> Shelly Cha, Hmong organizer
> Tamejavi immigrant cultural exchange festival, Fresno, California

Leaders in the field of community-building arts participation have long known this important relationship between cultural identity and connection. "[D]iscovering and claiming their own ethnic and class identities" through cultural expression, write Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard in the Rockefeller Foundation publication *Creative Community,* permits participants "...to recast themselves as makers of history rather than as passive objects. Grounded in the particulars of identity, individuals and communities can meet as equals—different and yet the same."[44]

Successful projects around the country have included the visual as well as performing arts. For example, "The Participation Project: Artists, Communities and Cultural Citizenship," supported by the Getty Research Institute, has promoted and explored the relationship between participation and collective visual art making in predominantly immigrant East Los Angeles.[45] Video and audio art provide effective vehicles for engagement, as do publication and journalism, both written and broadcast.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN PROJECTS

Support for civic participation through the arts often falls through the cracks. Arts funders may view community art as amateur in nature, while social justice funders may perceive artistic performance as foreign territory. But cultural expression and exchange offer a powerful tool to foundations interested in strengthening communities through immigrant civic engagement and integration. Here are some of the characteristics to look for in projects:

1. Are art and cultural presentation viewed as integral to community and civic life, owned by all in the community, and not simply as performance by experts for quick consumption by passive receiving audiences?

2. Is diversity of immigrant culture valued, each heritage as important and richly faceted as others?

3. Is cultural expression intended to lead to cultural exchange, bringing immigrants from various backgrounds together with the native born?

4. Are performances accompanied by context-setting frameworks and descriptions, so that fullest understanding can be achieved?

5. Does the project exhibit intentionality in attracting a diverse audience?

6. Does the project create democratic space that draws immigrants and refugees out into the public?

7. Do the project organizers demonstrate understanding that cultural production promotes and enhances engagement in civic life by immigrants?

8. Very importantly, are planning and preparation for the project viewed as organizing opportunities in themselves? Do they actively draw immigrant community members and immigrant artists into the process, creating safe space for learning and relationship building as participating groups make decisions about design, direction, and presentation?

Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee, © Rick Reinhard

TAMEJAVI:
A CULTURAL MARKETPLACE BUILT FROM DIVERSITY

The three-day Tamejavi cultural exchange festival in Fresno, California, was almost as many years in the making.

The idea germinated at cross-learning seminars for members of the Central Valley's Civic Action Network (CAN), a diverse group of grassroots immigrant civic participation projects. At the seminars, Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, indigenous and mestizo Mexican, Central American, African American, and Caucasian participants were asked to share some aspect of their culture with one another—music, traditional dress, customs, beliefs, stories, performances.

Facilitators at the American Friends Service Committee's Pan Valley Institute (PVI), host and home base of the network, were fascinated to see how quickly and profoundly cultural exchange created human connection among people from different backgrounds.

Soon CAN projects explicitly used cultural and artistic performance as a pathway to civic participation. The Khmer Society of Fresno produced and performed for the first time in the United States the traditional opera Lakhaun Bassac, which in Cambodia is used to draw people into public space for civic activity. Oaxacan dancers and teenage Mariachi bands joined the network. Original plays were staged about the epic journey of the Hmong from Laos to America and the current conditions of Mexican farm workers.

Several of these performing groups became the core around which the Tamejavi Festival was organized. Importantly, the organizing was done completely by members of the ethnic groups represented. They created the name Tamejavi to symbolize their joint effort, drawing from the Hmong, Spanish, and Mixteco words for cultural harvest market.

The goals of their marketplace: to amplify voices and increase pride in immigrant communities; to build new relationships and understanding across immigrant cultures and with other Valley residents toward increased civic participation and public recognition of diverse communities; to create a public space for creative expression that would foster civic engagement; and to strengthen skills and build models for civic engagement through cultural sharing.

The music, dance, theater, comedy, poetry, rap, films, story circles, oral histories, workshops, craft and food booths of Tamejavi took place from April 26 through 28, 2002, in Fresno's historic Tower District. With three stages, multiple venues, a diverse, low- to moderate-income audience of over 1,500 people, Tamejavi was a great success. "I felt like I was standing on the top of the world," said one participant. "Hmong to the left, Latinos to the right, I could see a different culture in every direction."

Asked about their success, those who worked together to create Tamejavi generally cite two reasons.

From the start, they used the event as an organizing opportunity, reaching out to participants and diverse community residents to plan and implement collectively; the actual festival, then, was but a milestone in a continuing series of civic activities, and the distinction between audience and performers was blurred. And they were harnessing the great power of culture, of the arts and humanities, to strengthen human identity and communication.

"The Festival was an intensive learning experience and a first step to engaging with the broader community, to feeling integrated," says Myrna Nateras-Martinez, Director of PVI. "People created an open, public space where they could communicate a collective voice and see themselves as citizens in the broad understanding of that term. The pride of displaying the best of their cultures helped them see what they can contribute to the community."

Says one of the Hmong organizers of the event: "Tamejavi built a foundation that allows people to see they have the same concerns, to move out and work with others. It was a stepping stone to civic life."

Some of the further stepping stones the Festival has created: a dance group that has expanded to 50 members and taken on the teaching of literacy, solidarity across ethnic groups in organizing to obtain driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, and poetry slams uniting African American and newcomer youth. And looking ahead to the next milestone, the collective planning for Tamejavi II has drawn yet more newcomers into the effort.

CHAPTER 4
The Rising Generation: Immigrant Youth and Civic Participation

Youth organizing institutions sprouted across the country in the late 1990s, actively engaging high school and sometimes middle-school students in community problem solving. Promoting youth development through civic participation, these institutions ask young people to take initiative and actively engage in the identification of community issues and the creation and execution of strategies to improve conditions. They are growing the next generation of politically conscious civic leaders.

Hundreds of such organizations exist across the United States, many led by twenty-something, college-educated sons and daughters of immigrants. The Active Element Foundation has documented the work of at least 500.[46] Usually quite diverse in their membership, many engage immigrant youth in civic life; some are immigrant-specific in their population, others engage the broader youth community. Active integration of art and culture characterizes their organizing.

RESOURCE

The Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing has published several reports on youth organizing, available at **www.fcyo.org**.

Issues tend to be those that are close to the lives of young people—school improvement, the criminal justice system, the environment—but organizing concerns are as diverse as the communities from which membership is drawn:

- Asian Youth Advocates of Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) organizes young Laotian women around environmental justice issues in the East San Francisco Bay Area.
- The youth chapters of Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment (CAFE) in South Carolina bring immigrant Latino and African American youth together on issues of racial and economic justice.
- In the backlash following September 11, 2001, Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM) in New York organized South Asian youth in campaigns against detentions and anti-immigrant violence.
- Among the colonias (communities lacking plumbing and other infrastructure) along New Mexico's Mexican border, young people from the Youth Organizing Project of the Colonias Development Council (CDC) have worked to bring water, waste water systems, streetlights, and recreational facilities to their communities.
- Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) in Long Beach, California organizes young Cambodian-American women around recent deportations to Cambodia.

Some immigrant youth organizing groups are explicitly cross-generational in nature. All encounter complex cross-generational issues. As the children of immigrants learn English and adapt to American ways, parents can come to rely on them for translation while worrying that they will lose their roots or cross lines of cultural taboo (gender issues are a prominent example).

> "When immigrant youth go to politicians, saying they want a better Chicago, they're saying, do we really want to build a democracy or not?"
>
> Camille Odeh, Executive Director
> Southwest Youth Collaborative

Indeed, immigrant youth organizers often build on the role that young people play as translators to their elders. And sometimes youth are more available for civic activity than their parents, who may work 12- to 14-hour days.

But intra-family, intergenerational concerns must be faced directly and parents must be engaged appropriately if immigrant youth organizing is to succeed. And although already frail budgets have been made more frail in the recent economic downturn, many programs have achieved notable success.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Some youth organizing efforts are embedded in community institutions led by adults. Others stand alone as fiscally sponsored projects or separate 501(c)(3) organizations. All actively involve youth in analysis of issues in their communities, collective planning for improvement that is strategic and politically aware, and the implementation of those plans.

Grounding young people in the experience of their communities and encouraging them to accept responsibility for action to make things better, civic engagement is a powerful mode of education and integration, particularly for immigrant youth who may have felt marginalized in their schools or neighborhoods. Here are some questions to ask when considering proposals:

1. Are the youth encouraged to think critically, stimulated but not indoctrinated by adults?

2. Does the organization provide age-appropriate support for youth development to accompany the civic activity?

3. Are the youth in positions of decision-making responsibility, guided but not dominated by adults?

4. Does evidence exist of leadership ladders that bring participating youth into staff and governance positions within the organization?

5. Is there sensitivity to inter-generational issues among the immigrant youth and their parents and elders, as well as cross-cultural issues among youth themselves, including proactive policies and programs to address these issues?

© Southwest Youth Collaborative

SOUTHWEST YOUTH COLLABORATIVE: STILL THEY RISE

Around the table of the weekly meeting of Generation Y, one of the two youth organizing efforts of the Southwest Youth Collaborative (SWYC) on Chicago's South Side, sit young people of Guatemalan, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Palestinian, Jordanian, and Iranian background, as well as African American Muslims and Christians. It's the opening of the school year, and they are discussing next steps in their two current campaigns.

"Higher Learning" focuses on issues of access to post-secondary education. "Still We Rise" is a broader social justice campaign, which, among other things, highlights the similarities between racial profiling of immigrants in the post-9/11 environment and the tracking of students of color in the schools.

Who will write the letters to state elected officials, inviting them to the Youth Summit? Who will write the letter of thanks and confirmation to the president of the Board of Education, who has promised to attend? Who will work with which high schools in preparation? Who is planning to take the Immigrant Freedom Ride bus to New York and the meeting with other youth organizing groups (the parental permission forms are due in a week)?

The assembled Generation Y youth had been prepared for their work through paid summer employment at SWYC, which trained them in organizing and community research. Their diversity reflects that of their neighborhoods and the values of SWYC. The institution's values are further reflected in the fact that the adult staff organizers rarely speak, giving full responsibility to the young people.

SWYC was originally created in 1992 as one of seven city sites funded by The Chicago Community Trust to coordinate existing youth and family services and reorient them toward preventive approaches to youth gang activity. From the outset, under the direction of Camille Odeh, SWYC adopted an asset-based organizing strategy, drawing service institutions, recreation centers, churches, and mosques into collaborative planning, creating a community governance structure that was inclusive and proportional. The original by-laws specified that one half of the board members would be local youth.

Over time, it became apparent that membership on the board alone was not enough to promote youth leadership development, and Generation Y evolved in 1997 to draw young people into civic participation.

The issue of criminalization of young people motivated early engagement. Illinois had adopted the Transfer Law, enabling youth from age 14 to be tried as adults. Generation Y helped to build the city-wide Community Justice Initiative, launching a "Know Your Rights" campaign (including responsibilities along with rights and based on the rationale that youth who understand the law won't break it). Members testified before their legislators and organized a protest at the Democratic National Convention.

A subsequent campaign sought to establish a set of city policy priorities to assist all youth in reaching their full potential. Generation Y organized young people by aldermanic district, working with the mayor to develop after-school programs and save summer youth jobs, working with the school board on "zero tolerance" policies that disproportionately removed students of color from the schools.

The commitment to inclusion of diversity informs all aspects of Generation Y. Membership runs the gamut, from gang members to wannabees to hip-hoppers to conservatives.

And SWYC has worked hard to create safe space for these youth and their parents to share experience and build relationships, a place where they can understand one another's value systems while creating new, shared values. Because Arab parents know and trust SWYC, they know they can permit their daughters to attend Generation Y meetings with boys. When cultural views begin to cross the line into discrimination (homosexuality, for example), the issues are discussed honestly and straightforwardly.

"No group has a monopoly on oppression," says Camille Odeh. "We need to understand other cultures and their pains. We need to validate and respect, and also to build a broader knowledge base that enhances self-esteem." Knowledge, skills, self-esteem, and understanding are all outcomes of the immigrant youth organizing of Generation Y.

CHAPTER 5
Newcomers and New Labor Organizing

Precinct-based electoral work with newcomers, union-community coalitions to promote civic engagement by immigrants, new 501(c)(3) and (c)(4) organizations devoted to encouraging immigrant union members to participate in civic life in their neighborhoods, national campaigns on behalf of immigrant rights.

These strategies seem a far cry from collective bargaining agreements—and from a national union movement that a decade ago was anything but pro-immigrant in its policies. Yet when in the mid-1990s John Sweeney ran for the presidency of the AFL-CIO, his platform reflected the labor movement's recognition that the country's demographic changes were of central importance to union base-building and future survival. In February 2000, in a historic vote that reversed its longstanding policy, the AFL-CIO called for an immediate amnesty for undocumented immigrants and an end to sanctions on employers who hired them.

© Southwest Youth Collaborative

RESOURCE

The Working Group on Labor and Community of Neighborhood Funders Group has produced several publications on immigrants and labor organizing. See **www.nfg.org**.

As more immigrants have joined the labor movement, they have challenged unions to develop new grassroots organizing strategies across lines of ethnicity and language. Immigrants have also moved into positions of union authority, where, working with their U.S.-born counterparts, they have led successful organizing campaigns to win better wages and conditions for all workers.

The new generation of leaders has also realized that the promotion of broad civic participation among newcomers in their communities is essential, not only to labor, but to positive change for all immigrants. They have sought creative partnerships with community-based organizations and launched innovative civic engagement campaigns, making organized labor a major influence in the field of immigrant civic engagement, raising public consciousness and drawing thousands of newcomers into civic life.

The fall 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride was another dramatic marker of labor's nationwide solidarity in support of immigrant rights and civic participation. Twenty buses and 1,000 riders from 10 cities across the country converged on Washington, DC and New York City to promote a five-point platform in support of immigrant citizenship and rights. Along the 10 routes, coalitions of organizations in 73 cities hosted riders and held events intended to catalyze local immigrant civic engagement and political power.[47]

To be certain, there are many more immigrants in the American workplace than unions have yet to reach (see Part III, Chapter 6 on Worker Centers). But the movement by unions, local and national, to promote broad civic participation among immigrants is here to stay.

- The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) of Ohio, which pioneered three-way contracts among labor, farmers, and the corporate end users of the product through a boycott of the Campbell Soup Company in the 1980s, is now working with North Carolina cucumber harvesters in a similar boycott of Mt. Olive Pickles.

- The United Farm Workers, reaffirming its commitment to civic participation, helped win the passage of a 2002 California law that improves bargaining positions with employers.

- Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), a 25-year-old union of tree planters and farmworkers in Oregon, helped to create an extensive network of interrelated organizations throughout the state to promote voter education and organizing, youth leadership, housing development, micro-enterprise among women, and immigrant rights.

- The Central Coast Citizenship Project, started by Teamsters Local 890 in the Salinas Valley of California, has evolved into a network of community organizations promoting immigrant civic participation and naturalization.

- Unite for Dignity, an independent non-profit associated with SEIU Local 1199 in Miami, Florida, offers leadership training among low-wage immigrant workers to build on successful union organizing of nursing home workers.

- Jobs with Justice, a decentralized national network of local affiliates in cities around the country, works to bring unions and community organizations to the table together in organizing campaigns.

> "Even though not everyone can vote, everyone can participate."
>
> Eliseo Medina, International Executive Vice President
> Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

The New York Civic Participation Project (NYCPP)

NYCPP is a 501(c)(3) collaboration among three unions and two community organizations that grew originally from the trust built through shared work to help families devastated by the September 11, 2001 attacks. It is organizing in neighborhoods with a concentration of low-wage immigrant workers.

Starting with Washington Heights, a predominantly Dominican community, and Bushwick, with an influx of newer immigrants from Mexico and Central and South America, the project has brought union members and other residents together in door-knocking, surveying, and community and union meetings to identify issues that will engage residents.

In Bushwick, where in the post-September 11 climate "the fear of new immigrants is tangible," according to Ecuadorian immigrant and organizer Angel, home visits were unsuccessful, so the project scheduled weekly meetings in local churches. "We start by asking them, what would you say to President George Bush if he were standing here right now?"

Campaigns have been created around local issues, such as the threatened closing of libraries due to budget cuts, and broader immigrant concerns, including language access and the dramatic increase in "no match" letters sent out to employers by the Social Security Administration, identifying employees whose names and Social Security numbers did not match.

NYCPP has expanded its work to the South Bronx and Queens. The important thing, said Arte, a participant who immigrated to the United States from Mexico in the early 1990s, is to find the "door" that will get people involved civically, building a base of grassroots leadership. Leaders also use the doorway image to describe NYCPP itself, a portal through which union membership engages the community, and community members engage the union, building civic and political power in partnership.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN PROJECTS

The efforts to promote newcomer civic engagement through labor-community partnerships are relatively young, and to date, only the most progressive unions have been actively involved. But such partnerships, if authentic, can benefit both partners, improving living conditions for newcomers and enhancing their integration into society. Here are some things to look for in proposals.

1. Does the project represent grassroots democratic organizing for the union, engaging immigrant members from the bottom up in skill, knowledge, and leadership development?

2. Collaborations with the community on strikes, unionization drives, and response to workplace rights violations can be of great help to labor in raising media attention and public awareness. Are the participating community organizations engaging immigrants in democratic organizing and not simply bringing them out in large numbers for show of support?

3. Are newcomer community members and union members equal partners in the identification of issues and development of strategies?

4. Are community-based institutions and unions—and their organizers—equal partners in the design and execution of campaigns?

5. Does electoral work adhere to legal restrictions, endorsing issues and not candidates, staying within the bounds of permissible lobbying?

THE ORGANIZATION OF LOS ANGELES WORKERS (OLAW)

The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), strategically collaborating with community groups, churches, and the ethnic media, created OLAW to engage immigrants in the political life of Los Angeles.

A non-partisan 501(c)(4) organization, OLAW focuses on issues—schools, health care, housing, wages—not candidates. It targets recent registered legalized citizens and infrequent voters, bringing education and encouragement to get to the polls. And it reaches out to all immigrants to play a role, regardless of their ability to vote.

Participants from unions and community organizations—the cross-fertilization is conscious—walk precincts, knock on doors, and speak with potential voters one on one, asking for signed pledges to vote. "Mi Familia Vota 100%," say the fliers. The precinct walkers (union members are paid their hourly wage while on the streets) plan and debrief together, learning from one another, building communication and organizational skills.

Leadership development is a deliberate strategy, moving beginners up a ladder from walker to team leader to campaign coordinator. And although OLAW began and remains Latino-based, it has drawn African-American and Asian-American communities into the effort.

Four hundred people canvassed daily in the weeks before the November 2002 election, 1,000 on the final weekend. According to OLAW, some of the precincts it has walked have increased their turnout by 15 to 20 percent. An independent poll by Bendixon & Associates confirmed that voters reached by OLAW came out heavily in support of the positions the organization took on local issues, including voting against the secession of the San Fernando Valley from Los Angeles.

"This mobilization of new Americans, almost all of them working poor," wrote journalist David Broder about OLAW in The Washington Post, "was once the work of political parties... It was abandoned in favor of fundraising to buy TV spots. Now, thank goodness, it is being revived by others, and democracy itself is growing."[48]

To grow the democracy elsewhere in the country, the SEIU has recently created the Center for Immigrant Democracy, which is applying the lessons learned in Los Angeles to increase newcomer participation in Arizona, Florida, and other states.

CHAPTER 6
Emerging Pathways: Worker Centers and Hometown Associations

WORKING LIVES

The vast majority of low-wage immigrants hold non-union jobs, and the efforts of organized labor are not available to them directly. But a growing number of "immigrant worker centers" across the country are providing service and advocacy support for these laborers; many have also become community centers promoting civic participation.

According to a 2004 study by the Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG) and the Economic Policy Institute, there are at least 114 worker centers in 30 states, generally having originated to meet demand in three generational waves: in the late 1970s and early 1980s among older immigrant groups in New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, and along the Texas border with Mexico; in the early 1990s as large numbers of immigrants and refugees entered the country from Latin America and Southeast Asia; and again since the beginning of the Twenty-first Century, many of these organizations connected with the National Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice and more located in the south and associated with labor unions than in the past.[49]

RESOURCES

The Phoenix Fund for Workers and Communities, a donor collaborative at the New World Foundation, maintains a database of worker centers, available at **www.phoenixfund.org**.

"The National Immigrant Worker Centers Study," published in 2004 by the Neighborhood Funders Group and written by Janice Fine of the Economic Policy Institute, is available online at **www.nfg.org**. The report's supporters include the Rockefeller Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, French American Charitable Trust, and Solidago Foundation.

Centers are ethnically or cross-ethnically based, with focus on one or more industries. They may provide legal services on wage disputes, English language classes, a voice for immigrants on local issues. The strongest are democratically organized and membership-based, developing leadership through active participation in civic campaigns (indeed, the NFG research has found worker centers to be more successful politically in the community than economically in the workplace).

The work of three such centers—The Workplace Project on Long Island, CASA de Maryland in Takoma Park, and the Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee in Alexandria, Virginia—has been described earlier in this report.

> "This award today is the proof, testimony to Robert Kennedy's vision, his belief that we as workers and poor people also are part of this democracy, that our voices must be a part of this country's great chorus and our interests taken into account..."[50]
>
> Lucas Benitez, Member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers
> upon receipt of the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award

TRANSNATIONAL LIVES

A growing number of "hometown associations" (HTAs), *clubes de oriundos,* also offer pathways to civic participation and integration for immigrants across the country.

Made possible by migration patterns that have brought Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Dominicans from the same sending town, typically rural, to the same receiving region in the United States, HTAs organize events such as dances, rodeos, beauty pageants, and picnics to raise money for social and public works projects in their originating provinces and a range of programs in their new homeland.

Such clubs are not new to the American immigration experience. Eastern European hometown associations of Jewish newcomers at the turn of the Twentieth Century in New York, for example, helped to build hospitals and service agencies still in existence today.[51] Mexican HTAs go back at least to the 1950s, though they have proliferated in the past decade. Although informal clubs likely number in the thousands, 600 HTAs are now registered in 30 states, more than 100 of those in Chicago, and more than 200 in Los Angeles.[52] Federations of clubs have also formed.

Preservation of the home culture for the next generation and support of economic development in the sending country remain preoccupations of many HTAs, but interest in American civic life is increasing, as is political clout. Some clubs, such as the Frente Indigena Oaxaquena Binacional, are active in promoting citizenship and organizing for civil rights here in the United States.

RESOURCE

The Los Angeles Immigrant Funders' Collaborative has developed an initiative to support peer learning and build the capacity of Latino Hometown Associations in Los Angeles. An overview of its model can be found at **www.gcir.org/laifc**. Further information is available from Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Project Director, at **213-382-2799** or **riverasa@verizon.net**.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Many HTAs are completely voluntary, lacking 501(c)(3) status and, consequently, remaining relatively invisible to most foundations. But at a time when transportation and communication improvements are revolutionizing the nature of transnational identities, they may represent the birth of a rich and innovative future for immigrant civic participation in the United States.

Created organically by newcomers to meet needs and interests, both HTAs and worker centers represent philanthropic investment opportunities. In addition to earlier questions about civic participation and intergroup relations, funders considering support of HTAs and worker centers can explore the following issues.

1. HTAs and worker centers have strong leaders and direct ties to their constituencies. How will the proposed civic engagement activity strengthen current leadership and develop new grassroots leaders?

Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee, © Rick Reinhard

2. Voluntary activity is the centerpiece and strength of HTAs and worker centers. Foundation support can potentially harness or undermine this strength. Is the foundation positioned by its culture and practice to invest the time needed to know these organizations and carefully consider the type, timing, and amount of support appropriate to them?

3. Because some HTAs and worker centers are emerging grassroots organizations with limited staffing and infrastructure, some foundations may be tempted to provide support to make them "effective organizations." For those that are informally organized, is nonprofit incorporation necessarily the only correct path? If it is, what technical-assistance resources will be needed to help them build their capacity as viable nonprofit, community-based organizations?

4. Drawing on practices in countries of origin, most HTAs and some worker centers may have institutional structures that are different from a typical U.S. nonprofit organization. Prospective funders will need to gain an understanding of the different ways in which such groups operate and rethink assumptions about organizational structure and effectiveness. When considering potential support, can the foundation create enough flexibility in its approach to do this rethinking?

5. Realistic expectation is paramount when working with emerging immigrant-based organizations. While many HTAs and worker centers have demonstrated promise in the civic participation arena, bringing that work to the next level will require time and patience. Is the foundation positioned to take the time and apply the patience?

6. Beyond looking at a single organization, what opportunities can be pursued for peer-learning through networking among the HTAs or among worker centers?

Coalition of Immokalee Workers: Awareness + Commitment = Change

Each of its more than 2,000 Mexican, Mayan Guatemalan, and Haitian members pays five dollars to join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a worker center in the heart of the citrus, tomato, and watermelon fields of Southwest Florida.[53] CIW emerged from the Southwest Florida Farmworker Project in the mid 1990s to "bring about a deeper, more sustainable solution to Immokalee's problems."[54]

The problems have included substandard wages, wretched working conditions, and involuntary servitude; civic participation has emerged as the deeper, more sustainable solution. CIW uses community organizing and popular education to engage farmworkers "in the entire organizational process, ensuring that they define the problem, discover the root of the problem and develop a means to overcome the problem themselves."[55]

Attempting to open dialogue with growers, members collected petitions, staged a hunger strike, and conducted the "March for Dignity, Dialogue and a Fair Wage," during which they walked carrying a replica of the Statue of Liberty for 230 miles in 15 days, stopping each night to hold local community meetings. They have also conducted their own research to assist in state prosecution of involuntary servitude, helping to win the successful prosecution of six slavery cases between 1997 and 2003. In 2001, in an effort to raise wages for tomato pickers, CIW started a boycott of Taco Bell, a major buyer of tomatoes. The campaign has included sophisticated use of media and nationwide tours, gathering extensive support from around the country.

But the key is the full involvement of members in every aspect of the work. "If you want true change, it won't come from Washington, or from the lawyers," says Lucas Benitez, one of CIW's elected representatives. "It will come from people in the field... If you change people's consciousness, the people take care of it themselves."[56]

Member consciousness has been deepened through the "context and custom of community activity and group reflection"[57] developed by CIW. As a CIW Web site slogan says, "Awareness + Commitment = Change."

CHAPTER 7
Challenges and the Organizations Confronting Them

Newcomers face many barriers to civic participation, including language, long working hours, and cultural predispositions from their home-country experience.[58] Systemic issues in nonprofit organizations present two additional challenges.

The majority of organizations working with newcomers offer service to and advocacy for clients, rather than encouraging engagement and leadership development among members. Also, too few immigrant and refugee organizers are in positions of authority, raising questions about authentic leadership development and complicating strategies to draw immigrants from diverse cultural and political backgrounds into civic life.

Organizations across the country are confronting both of these challenges. They include newly created and long-established intermediaries, as well as mature institutions evolving toward organizing.

RESOURCE

The Hyams Foundation commissioned "Research on Barriers and Opportunities for Increasing Leadership in Immigrant and Refugee Communities" from MOSAICA: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism. See **www.hyamsfoundation.org/publications**.

The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), for example, has in recent years moved from service delivery toward greater grassroots civic participation in its approach.

An umbrella advocacy and policy coalition of approximately 200 member organizations, NYIC has promoted naturalization assistance since 1994, and between 1995 and 2002 registered 200,000 new citizens to vote. Education on voter rights and mobilization were integrated over time into the outreach. More than 600 bilingual volunteers worked at polling stations in the 2002 election.

Seeking to build on these successes, NYIC members began a deeper conversation in the late 1990s about how to build immigrant voice and power. Volunteers from member groups needed a next level of experience, offering sustained involvement in issues that affected their lives.

> "The future is in organizations that have an educated, organized base that not only understand government but understand those who are trying to influence government."
>
> Margie McHugh, Executive Director
> New York Immigration Coalition

The Rockefeller Foundation has supported one new NYIC strategy of engagement, "Project Involve." Working with NYIC to develop a "Democracy Involvement Curriculum," 10 community partner organizations representing several ethnic backgrounds have received grants to engage constituents in community life. The project's purpose, according to NYIC's Request for Proposals, "is to bring the voices and votes of immigrant families into the many arenas where decisions about important community issues are made: from actual elections for public office to institutions as diverse as community boards, parent-teacher associations, the political party structures, and local police precinct and hospital advisory boards."

Intermediary organizations (see sidebars on page 62) are available to assist institutions such as NYIC and its member groups as they learn to engage their newcomer constituents in participation and to develop organizing skills in leaders who emerge. Inter-mediaries also exist to train and place immigrant organizers.

In some instances with help from such institutions, all of the national organizing networks have responded proactively to the need to develop immigrant organizers. Several networks now hold trainings in Spanish. Hmongs, Dominicans, Iranians, Somalis, Haitians, Trinidadians, Latinos, and others are organizing in various regions of the country. Much work lies ahead, but progress has been made.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Change from service or advocacy to civic participation is a change in world view, one that has proven to be at least as difficult as any other organizational transformation. Likewise, change in the culture of community organizing, which as it matured in America was predominantly white, middle class, and male, has at times been slow. Foundations should be aware of these challenges as they evaluate funding requests and pose questions to assess genuine civic engagement.

1. How does the intermediary organization describe the difficulties of the work? What has it learned, how has it adjusted?

2. Do principles of civic participation inform the intermediary's own approach, its "curriculum"?

3. Is collaborative peer learning employed among the individuals being trained and the institutions receiving technical assistance?

4. How has success been measured? What is the evidence of sustainability of success?

5. How do the immigrant organizers and organizations themselves assess the training they have received?

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From Clients to Community Leaders

Launched originally by an Emma Lazarus Fund grant from the Open Society Institute to assist in naturalization, the **Northern California Citizenship Project (NCCP)**, based in San Francisco, now works with over 100 service organizations in the Bay Area, building capacity in these institutions to encourage immigrants to play a role in civic and political life.

NCCP programs include voter education and mobilization, training for organizations in immigrant leadership development, networking of institutions that empower immigrant parents to participate more actively in their children's education, and mini-grants to organizations involving immigrants in policy-making processes at the local, state, and federal level.

The Boston-based **Center to Support Immigrant Organizing (CSIO)** was started by three grassroots organizers in 2000 to help immigrant-led organizations develop a membership base of resident leaders participating actively in the community. CSIO is working with both organizations and organizers, toward three broad objectives: to provide capacity-building support to immigrant organizations, to develop immigrant organizers, and to promote collaboration among immigrant community organizations and labor.

CSIO's immigrant organizer network involves as many as 50 people and includes trainings, peer learning and mentoring. In the long term, CSIO seeks to create a pool of organizational-development consultants who understand immigrant civic participation, and to include institutional ability for constituent organizing in the country's dialogue about organizational capacity building.

From Civic Participants to Community Organizers

For 20 years the **Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO)** in Oakland, California has been training organizers of color, including immigrants, to work for meaningful social change in community institutions across the country.

CTWO's Movement Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP) consists of a four-day initial training, followed by a six-week stipended internship in a participating community organization, and concluding with four more days of debriefing, evaluation, and training. Interns work with local leaders to strengthen the organization, learning skills of outreach, relationship building, research, campaign action, fundraising, and teamwork. Since 1985 MAAP has trained and helped to place more than 300 organizers in full-time positions.

The **Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP)**, based in St. Paul and working throughout Minnesota, took some cues from CTWO before opening its doors formally in 1993, partly in response to the growth of immigrant populations in the state. The program consists of a six-month paid apprenticeship, based in a community organization, working on a project with a local mentor. Each month the apprentices participate in a two-day OAP training on some aspect of organizing.

OAP's first immigrant apprentice, a Latino, was in the class of 1994/95. Numbers of newcomers grew steadily over the next several years and increased markedly between 1998 and 2000, including Mexicans, Central Americans, Sudanese and Somalis, Hmong and Vietnamese. As the newcomer population has grown and the issues they face have intensified, OAP has played an increasingly important role in immigrant and refugee organizer development in Minnesota.

Chapter 8
When the Path to Citizenship Becomes the Campaign Trail: Newcomers as New Elected Officials

Immigrants who become involved in civic life interact with their elected representatives and help make policies. More and more are seeking to become policymakers themselves.

The approximately 100 immigrants and refugees now holding statewide elected office come from over 30 different countries, and their occupations are equally diverse, from attorneys to automobile dealers, teachers to tree specialists, homemakers to housing and urban developers.[59]

Tony Lam became the first Vietnamese-American elected official in the United States when he joined the City Council of Westminster, California in 1992. The 1998 City Council election in Lowell, Massachusetts brought into office the first Cambodian-American, Chanrithy Uong.[60]

Suburban Cupertino, California, the headquarters of Apple Computer, where the population of 50,000 has grown from 10 to almost 45 percent Asian American since 1980, has become something of a phenomenon in middle-class grassroots Asian politics. Using local community colleges as "candidate hatcheries" and reversing cultural trends that have tended to steer Asians away from public service, Asian Americans held nine of 28 local offices in 2004. Newly elected City Councilor Kris Wang immigrated from Taiwan in 1980.[61]

The newcomer electorate from which these elected officials have emerged has changed dramatically with the country's demography. The number of naturalized citizens climbed from 6.5 million, 39 percent of the legal newcomer population in 1990, to 11.3 million or 49 percent in 2002.[62] Once naturalized, although newcomers appear to register to vote at a rate lower than the population overall (58 percent versus 70 percent in 2000), they turn out to the polls at a rate slightly higher (87 percent versus 86 percent in 2000).[63] From 1996 to 2000 the registered foreign-born electorate increased by 20 percent, far greater than the increase of 1.5 percent among the full U.S. voter population.[64]

Around the country, as the number of immigrant civic participants has increased, the organizing institutions engaging them have increasingly adopted and shared electoral strategies.

For example, in January 2004, the Center for Community Change (CCC) launched its Community Voting Project, working in 26 key states to increase the scale, effectiveness, identity, and visibility of non-partisan voter programs in low-income communities. This effort, involving the CCC's nationally networked Immigrant Organizing Project, builds on its National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, in which newcomer populations played an important role and linkage to local organizing was central.

> "I'm very pragmatic. I think that comes from my experiences growing up in the projects, as well as my mother's experiences as an interpreter. One of the biggest issues in our nation is that society is changing. I'm Asian American. We're a small group, but we are going to become more involved in government. There's going to be even more diversity."[65]
>
> Pennsylvania State Representative John Pippy,
> naturalized citizen born in Thailand

Although foundations, of course, cannot support partisan campaigns, they can support non-partisan voter education, get-out-the-vote efforts, and leadership development programs, all of which can involve immigrants of any status within legal confines. The campaign profiled here (see sidebar), while illustrating only one of many paths to elected office, offers foundations valuable insights on the building blocks for immigrant political participation:

- The importance of building upon social and cultural networks among newcomer ethnic groups.
- The resurgence of grassroots campaigning among newcomers, encouraging voter registration and engaging both those who can and cannot vote.
- The importance of relationships developed through organizing around specific issues in building broader campaign networks.
- The role that policies, such as public financing, play in boosting newcomer political participation.
- The leadership role of the college-educated 1.5 generation, foreign-born immigrant children who have grown up in the United States.
- The value of encouragement from immigrant role models, as well as other role models of color, in inspiring other newcomers to become interested in elected office.

Richard Sennott, © 2003 Star Tribune

When Mee Moua, candidate for the January 2002 special election in Minnesota's Senate District 67 on St. Paul's immigrant East Side, said at a press conference that she didn't care if she won, as long as new immigrant and refugee voters came out to the polls, her campaign team had a collective heart attack.

They were under-30, college-educated Hmong, most of whom had never before worked on a political campaign. They knew candidate Moua's sentiments—she had instructed her door knockers to send the same message. But they also were convinced their candidate could be successful, even though she was running in the primary against a hand-picked opponent with the party machine behind him. If they could register 500 new voters, they felt they could win.

In the end the campaign got that many new registrants from the Hmong community alone, 51 percent of the vote in the special election, and the first statewide Hmong office holder in the country, a result that has made Minnesota's elected officials sit up and take notice.

Senator Moua's story has become emblematic of the political coming of age of the refugee Hmong population in America. She was five years old, eldest of four children, when, following the loss of the Vietnam War, her family fled the mountains of Laos with thousands of other American-allied Hmong. After four years in the refugee camp in Thailand, the Moua family settled in Appleton, Wisconsin, among the first refugee people of color in the small town.

Educated in Catholic schools, she excelled (the first time she realized she was speaking English, she remembers, was in the fifth grade, two years after entering the classroom). At Brown University she forged her political consciousness and found her niche: "Poverty policy," she says. "SSI, AFDC, Section 8 housing, it was all about my life ... to effect changes in the lives of the people I loved, I had to go to policy." At the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs she found mentors—Professor Lodis Rhodes, an African American who "spoke the language of idealism"—and role models, including Barbara Jordan.

During Moua's first year at the University of Minnesota Law School, her uncle Neal Thao ran for the local school board. She helped in his successful campaign (he was the second Hmong to be elected to the board), became involved with the Democratic Farm Labor Party, and remained politically active throughout law school, nurturing a growing dream that low-income people of color in Minnesota, including Hmong and other immigrants, could create a voting block with real political power.

SENATOR MEE MOUA: A POLITICAL COMING OF AGE

The realization of that dream was, in a sense, forced upon Moua in her first senatorial campaign. Her political friends were not available to help in a primary for which the party machinery had already selected a candidate. So she began calling relatives, some of her more than 70 first cousins.

She put together a campaign team from among the Hmong 1.5 generation, the children of Laos and the Thai refugee camps who had grown up translating American culture for their parents. Pakou Hang, who became campaign director, had written her senior thesis at Yale on the evolution of political identity among the Hmong people.

The campaign relied heavily on the extended and intricate social ties in the Hmong community. All of the clans—Moua, Yang, Vang, Thao, Lee—were interrelated through marriage, and all could be reached for volunteer help.

Fundraising, for example, was organized through the clan structure. For candidates who agree to public financing, Minnesota's campaign contribution refund law reimburses, in any calendar year, an individual up to $50 and a couple up to $100 for a political donation. Throughout the clans, members of the Hmong community were asked to donate money they would be reimbursed by the state. Because the special election crossed two calendar years, people could donate twice. Many also contributed their refunds.

The campaign raised $40,000 in this way. Clan tree systems were also used to set out lawn signs and to locate Hmong who were eligible to vote but had not been participating.

The campaign, itself, says Senator Moua, "was so conventional it was unconventional." Lacking the expertise of the political power structure, the team dusted off an old campaign manual, so out of date, according to Moua, it had been written by the person who designed the original precinct system in Minnesota. The candidate stuck to four core issues of importance to low-income people of color—education, affordable housing, public safety, and economic development.

The team targeted areas of low voter turnout, and the candidate went door to door, community center to community center. Three hundred consistent volunteers canvassed the district's 30,000 households three different times.[66] Campaign calls and door knocks doubled as civics lessons, explaining the registration and voting process. Elder Hmong drove vans and SUVs for campaign events and poll shuttles; Hmong high school students volunteered.

According to the 2000 Census, 41,800 of the country's 170,000 Hmong live in Minnesota. Of these, over 24,000 live in St. Paul, a population that has more than doubled since 1990. In 2003 the Minnesota voter file listed over 5,000 Hmong names, a number augmented by the Moua campaign.[67]

The election of Senator Moua was but one step in the political maturation of the Hmong in Minnesota.

There had been the earlier school board elections. Civic engagement campaigns had been launched against racist remarks made by a local radio show host, as well as around issues of welfare reform and naturalization (the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000, championed by then U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone and Congressman Bruce Vento from Minnesota, provides an exemption from the language requirement for Hmong veterans and their widows). This civic activity helped to build a network of relationships and collective political consciousness.

Since Moua's victory, the Hmong community has gained further advances in the Twin Cities and elsewhere around the country. In 2002 Cy Thao was elected State Representative in Minnesota, and Dr. Tony Vang became the first Hmong member of the Fresno, California School Board. In September 2003 Minnesota primaries, several Hmong candidates showed well in the campaigns for St. Paul's City Council and School Board.

But Senator Moua's step was highly symbolic, and not only among the Hmong. "Mee Moua has become the 'idea' of enfranchisement for the disenfranchised," says LouAnne Moua, communications director for the special election campaign and now a member of the Senator's staff. The Senator has taken a leading role on the issue of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants and has become a heroine to local Somali refugees.

Low-income people of color from outside Moua's district visit her regularly to air their concerns. Senator Moua directs them to their elected senator or representative and then follows up on the issues with her colleagues, among whom she is trusted personally and respected politically.

The political respect comes from the voting base she helped to put on the map, from the fact that her campaigns have owed nothing to special interests. "Politicians have a different view now of Somalis, Latinos, and Hmong," says the Senator. "And I haven't been shy to give the statistics. There are thousands of Hmong in Minnesota, and I am related to every single one."

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Conclusion

Democracy at Work

We Americans have two dominant cultural metaphors for our democracy. One is the town hall meeting, where our ancestors gathered to deliberate and make public decisions. The image carries an implication of cultural homogeneity; people participated because their grandparents had. But if your grandparents grew up in the mountains of Laos, and mine in the mountains of Mexico, what then?

The metaphor for American cultural diversity is the barn raising. On the frontier, people who had come from many different backgrounds gathered to build one another's barns. I was motivated to help you because I needed your help on my barn. Together, we raised good barns. We also learned how to build barns, and we learned to know one another through the shared experience.

Newcomer civic participation is barn-raising democracy. The problem the immigrant wants to solve motivates participation in the collective problem solving. Together, the civic participants improve community conditions. Through the shared experience, they educate themselves and build trusting relationships with one another, becoming a part of the broader society.

A few fundamental principles are in play:

- ***Engagement is paramount.*** Newcomers are encouraged to engage in all aspects of community problem solving.
- ***Participation starts where the newcomer starts.*** More than likely this begins with working on issues that affect their daily lives, not in a voting booth or a political campaign, though it is the way to get there.
- ***Education informs all.*** Learning is at the core of program design.
- ***Relationship matters.*** Building relationships with people from different backgrounds is a central program component.

Democracy is its own integrating force, and the community organizations putting these principles into action represent the democracy at work. The global conditions that have changed the country's demography so dramatically are not going away. As this change continues, simultaneously testing our ideals and increasing our assets, foundations of many interests have reason to consider investment in newcomer civic participation.

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SELECTED READINGS

For more resources on civic participation and general immigrant issues, check out the annotated bibliography at **www.gcir.org**.

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