



**Emerging Communities:**  
**A Snapshot of a Growing Hispanic America**

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### **League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)**

The Mission of the League of United Latin American Citizens is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.

LULAC seeks to increase the number of Hispanics serving in appointed and career positions within the Federal government at all levels.

# **THE LEAGUE OF UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS**

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## Executive Summary

### **EMERGING COMMUNITIES: *A Snapshot of a Growing Hispanic America***

- Latinos now compose 13 percent of the total U.S. population. Hispanics became the fastest growing U.S. minority group increasing their numbers 58 percent nationwide from 22.4 million in 1990, to 35.3 million. The change occurred relatively rapidly and in places that had never before witnessed influxes of Latinos. A new America is being born.
- Latinos are no longer confined to traditional metropolitan receiving areas like Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, or Miami – they are growing in communities across the country. In traditional settlement areas the Latino population continues to grow even if at a slower rate, but most importantly, they are also dispersing to the suburban fringes of these markets.
- Though 58 percent of Latinos live in ten major metro areas, 42 percent have dispersed to areas not commonly accustomed to receiving clusters of Hispanics. Southern states became major new destinations for Latinos, fostering a growth of settlement in small cities, towns and rural areas, many of which are depressed. Their rapid arrival is changing the social, demographic and cultural landscape of these communities that had not really experienced large numbers of Hispanics in their region.
- Latinos bring with them both needs and assets that are re-defining the social, economic, and political needs of communities across the country. By determining what they are, we can begin to assess how we, as a nation, can facilitate an improved quality of life for all of our residents.

## **EMERGING COMMUNITIES: A SNAPSHOT OF A GROWING HISPANIC AMERICA**

### ***Introduction***

After the U.S. Census 2000 results came in, what neighborhoods across America were witnessing daily was confirmed statistically: the number of Hispanics/Latinos<sup>1</sup> in the United States had grown dramatically throughout the 1990s. Latinos now compose 13 percent of the total U.S. population. Indeed, Hispanics became the fastest growing U.S. minority group increasing their numbers 58 percent nationwide from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in the recently adjusted Census 2000 numbers. The change occurred relatively rapidly and in places that had never before witnessed influxes of Latinos. A new America is being born.

This paper explores the growth of the Latino community in the 1990s in three target areas: Cicero, IL (suburb of Chicago); Orlando, FL; and the Little Rock, AR metropolitan statistical area. According to the study, *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations*, two trends stand out: 1) Latinos are no longer confined to traditional metropolitan receiving areas like Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, or Miami – they are growing in communities across the country. And, 2) in traditional settlement areas they continue to grow even if at a slower rate, but more importantly they are also dispersing to the suburban fringes of these large established Latino metros.

The three locations chosen for this analysis were picked because they are representative of these national trends and are striking in terms of their quest for organizational representation in the economic and political arenas. Cicero, IL is a suburb of Chicago and representative of the trend in Latino community's movement from the urban center to the suburbs. Orlando includes the entire metropolitan area, not just

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<sup>1</sup> . The terms Latino and His panic are used interchangeably throughout this briefing paper. As defined by the U.S. Census, origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of a person or a person's parents or ancestors before their arrival to the United States. People who identify their origin as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race.

Orlando City, and is the fifth largest destination area in the country for Hispanics. All three locations were chosen because of their status as a new Latino destination.<sup>2</sup>

Though 58 percent of Latinos live in 10 major metro areas, 42 percent have dispersed to areas not commonly accustomed to receiving clusters of Hispanics. Southern states became major new destinations for Latinos, fostering a growth of settlement in small cities, towns, and rural areas, many of which were economically depressed. Their rapid arrival is changing the social, demographic and cultural landscape of these communities that had not really experienced large numbers of Hispanics in their region. Areas like Orlando, that had a small base population of Latinos experienced “hypergrowth”<sup>3</sup> in the 1990s growing 859 percent between 1980 and 2000. Orlando is now fifth in the nation as a new destination for Latinos. Seventeen percent of the city’s total population is of Latino heritage.

Because the growth of the Latino population is no longer limited to just a few regions, it is critical to engage in an initial assessment of their effect on the receiving communities, not only in terms of demographics, but also in terms of delivery systems and community relations. The most apparent and immediate impression is that emerging Latino communities in non-traditional receiving areas initially impact available local resources. Oftentimes receiving communities are unprepared for the arrival of the relatively quick influx of Hispanics in their area, many of which have not yet mastered the English language. As a result, the newly arrived Latinos often face a series of challenges that can range from lack of affordable housing and limited access to health care, to teachers who are not prepared to educate students in the process of learning English as a second language (ESL). It becomes particularly worrisome in the area of emergency services such as 911 lines, police departments, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) when providers cannot communicate adequately with the newly arrived, Limited English Proficient (LEP) Latino consumers in a time of crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> The metropolitan area definitions and those of the central city and suburbs are categorized according to the data provided by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and the primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs). The categories of established Latino metro and new Latino destinations are based on the definitions used by the Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy of the Brookings Institution and the Pew Hispanic Center.

<sup>3</sup> Suro, Roberto. July 2002. *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations*. Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center. The Brookings Institution.

Yet, newly established communities often bring life back to areas that had experienced extended economic depression, particularly in the South. Latinos also arrive with skill-sets, talents, and networks of experts that permit them to go after the American dream and benefit the economic well being of their communities. Thirty-nine and one half percent of minority-owned businesses in the United States are Hispanic-owned, compared to 30 percent for Asian-owned and 27.1 percent Black-owned. As Latinos become more integrated socially and economically, they begin to organize and get involved politically. The rates of integration are variable. Age, income, education and English-proficiency are determining factors in the extent that they get involved in the community and are accepted into them.

To date, little comparative research has been done on the extraordinary demographic changes taking place in emerging communities, particularly in the South. In this paper, we will explore how Latinos are faring in their new settlement areas. How are the communities changing? What are the challenges that they face in their communities? How are they overcoming these challenges? What are the needs of Latinos in these new communities? What are their contributions? How has the larger community accepted the newcomers?

The information gathered in this report should provide some understanding for local, state, and national public policymakers, as well as to social service providers of the characteristics of these relatively new arrivals. Latinos bring with them both needs and assets that are re-defining the social, economic, and political needs of communities across the country. By determining what they are, we can begin to assess how we, as a nation, can facilitate an improved quality of life for all of our residents. In the first part of this study, we will look at the U.S. Census data to get an overall sense of where Hispanics are demographically, economically, and socially. We will then examine the four cases and conclude with some thoughts as to the challenges that Latinos face and the opportunities that they create for the nation.



## NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

### *Hispanics Dominate U.S. Population Growth*

Latinos have grown by more than 58 percent between 1990 and 2000 nationwide.<sup>4</sup> According to the 2000 U.S. Census Hispanics were the fastest growing minority group in the 1990s and now comprise 13 percent of the total population. This rapid growth, namely spurred by immigration and high birth rates<sup>5</sup>, resulted in Latinos surpassing African-Americans as the largest minority group prior to the predicted date of 2005. The U.S. Census cites that 39 percent of Latinos immigrated to the United States in the 1990s compared to 28 percent in the 1980s. Of the 35.3 million Latinos currently in the United States, approximately 8.5 million are between 22 and 35 years of age and approximately 26 percent of the population, more than ten million, are under the age of 18.<sup>6</sup>

### *Geographic Dispersion*

While the Latino population continues to grow in most metropolitan areas, the rate and location of increase varies. Latino metro areas such as Chicago, New York and Miami grew the most in overall numbers, with a significant amount of the Latino population moving to their suburbs like Cicero, IL.<sup>7</sup> New Latino destinations such as Orlando, FL, Little Rock City, AR, and Washington, DC outgrew traditionally Hispanic metro areas such as Houston and San Diego by 15 percent, with the new Latino areas growing more than 250 percent and the traditional “Latino hubs,” averaging 235 percent in population growth. The growth of the Latino presence in country’s 100 largest cities contributed to these cities overall growth rate from 17 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2000.

### *An Ethnically Diverse Population*

Latinos are ethnically diverse. Although two-thirds of the Latino population is of Mexican origin, there are approximately 17 different groups represented in this “national”

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<sup>4</sup> This growth outpaces the overall U.S. population which grew by 40 percent in the same period.

<sup>5</sup> Of the 8.7 million children born during this time period, more than half, 4.5 million, were Latino

<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Census 2000 also reports that Latino children are 17 percent of the child population in the United States and that the median age for Hispanics is 25.9<sup>6</sup> compared with 35.3 for the rest of the United States.

<sup>7</sup> Suro, Roberto. July 2002. *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations*. Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center. The Brookings Institution.

community. “The fastest-growing populations in the ‘90s were not the large[r] Hispanic groups – Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans – but [the] Hispanics from the Dominican Republic and various Central and South American Countries.”<sup>8</sup> These new Latinos are primarily dispersed throughout 330 metro areas in the continental United States.

In Florida, where Hispanics represent 16.8 percent of the state’s population, the number of Central and South Americans, 850,000, nearly equals the numbers of Cubans, 900,000. Florida is also home to more than 500,000 Puerto Ricans and 400,000 Mexicans. In the Washington, DC metropolitan area there are more than 300,000 new Latinos. Two-thirds – mostly Salvadorans – are from Central America and one-third from South America, particularly from Peru and Ecuador. While the Hispanic population in Illinois encompasses about two dozen nationality groups the community is primarily Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Guatemalan: of the 1.5 million Hispanics in Illinois, 1.1 million are of Mexican origin, 75 percent<sup>9</sup>, 158,000 are Puerto Rican, 18,000 are of Cuban origin, and 210,000 are from Central, South America and the Caribbean.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Similar Traits***

While Latinos consist of many national origins, they share similar characteristics. The Milken Institute’s report, *American Demography for the New Century*, finds that Latinos as a whole are younger, have more children, have greater family stability, share Roman Catholic roots, and generally have a dominant father figure or male role model. More than half of all Latinos living in the United States are fully bilingual. Approximately 54.5 percent of Latinos were born outside of the United States, while the remaining 45.5 percent were native-born U.S. citizens.

### ***An Entrepreneurial Community***

Real household<sup>11</sup> income for Hispanics, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, was more than \$42,000, compared to \$33,836 the median household income in 2001 (inflation-

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Kay. July 2002. *The Consumer Counts: The Hispanic Market*. Home Accents Today. [www.homeaccentstoday.com](http://www.homeaccentstoday.com).

<sup>9</sup> An increase from 70 percent in 1990.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census 2000.

adjusted dollars).<sup>12</sup> Of the more than 10 million Latino households, the average household size was about 3.46. Nearly one-third, or 30.6 percent, of Latino households have an annual income of \$50,000 or more. The Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, estimated that the Hispanic purchasing power in 2001 at more than \$452 billion, a 118 percent increase since 1990.

Although minorities made up about 30.9 percent of the total population in 2000, the Small Business Administration estimates that they owned just 14.6 percent of all U.S. businesses in 1997. Of the overall number of U.S. businesses, Latinos owned 5.8 percent of all small businesses, 1.2 million out of a total of 20.8 million firms, Asian-Americans owned 4.4 percent, African-Americans owned 4.0 percent, and Native Americans owned 0.9 percent. Of the 4.5 million jobs created by minority-owned business in 1997, Hispanic-owned firms created 30.8 percent of the jobs, Asian-Americans firms created 48.8 percent of the jobs, African-Americans businesses created 15.9 percent of jobs, and Native Americans firms created 6.6 percent of jobs.

Of the more than 1 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the country, 39.3 percent were owned by Mexican-origin Latinos, 23.9 percent were owned by Hispanic Latin Americans, 10.4 percent by Cubans, 5.8 percent by Puerto Ricans, 4.8 percent by Spaniards, and 15.7 percent by other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino owners.

### ***Latinos as Consumers***

A Milken Institute Policy Brief (2000), that considered income, family size, and age assessed that Latino spending patterns are statistically different from those of whites, blacks and Asians. Latinos are a very diverse population with three large sub-groups, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. In addition they have a rising share of immigrants from Central and South America. However, despite this range of national origin, the Milken study suggests that Latino sub-groups share more similarities with each other than with whites, blacks, or Asians.

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<sup>11</sup> According to the U.S. Census definition for household, a household includes all of the people who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census 2000.

After adjusting for income and family size, Hispanic spending patterns reveal that Latinos also tend to spend more on food, utilities, and shelter and less on services and health care. Latinos' tend to have large households and a larger percentage of Hispanics population earn lower incomes than whites; in 1998, Hispanic households spent an average of \$30,000, while the average white household spent \$37,300 and the average household for all populations spent \$35,000.

According to the Milken study, the average Latino household spends more on food than any other group. Latinos on average spend about 11.2 percent of their household budget on food, compared to whites who spend 7.4 percent and blacks who spend 9.2 percent of their household budget on food. A large number of Hispanics tend to buy food in bulk from large discounters like Costco, spending an average of about \$150 per week, and tend to be very brand loyal. Latinos also spend more on clothes, are label conscious, and are above-average shoppers at such retailers as the Gap. Latinos spend approximately 6.4 percent of their budget on apparel, compared to whites who spend about 4.4 percent. In contrast, Latinos spend less on health care than most households, averaging about 3.7 percent compared to all households, who spend 5.4 percent.

### ***Health Insurance***

Hispanics are the most likely to be uninsured. A March 2003 report released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that 18,566,000, 52.2 percent, of Hispanics under the age of 65 did not have insurance coverage. This number represents 24.9 percent of the total number of uninsured people in the country, a disproportionate number when compared to the total percentage of the population, which is 13 percent. Approximately 44 percent of poor Hispanics are uninsured and the proportion of the foreign-born population with health insurance, 33.4 percent, is more than double for that of the native population, 12.4 percent. Non-citizens are more likely to be uninsured than naturalized citizens, 42.9 percent and 17.2 percent, respectively. Despite these dismal statistics the number of uninsured Latino children dropped in 2001, from 25.3 percent to 24.1 percent.

The Robert Wood Johnson study highlights that among states, Florida (4.6 million) and Illinois (11.1 million) have the largest number of uninsured people under the age of 65, while Arkansas had among the highest percentage of uninsured people, 34.0 percent. Only

44 percent of working Hispanics, regardless of age, have employer-based health insurance benefits, compared to 72 percent of Whites and 53 percent of African Americans.

Medicaid provides health insurance to about 20 percent of all non-elderly Hispanics compared to less than ten percent of all non-elderly whites. Medicaid covers about 25 percent of Hispanics with incomes below poverty and about fifty percent of African Americans with incomes below poverty; yet, of the estimated 31.6 million that Medicaid serviced in 2001, approximately half were non-Hispanic whites. Nearly 25 percent of Hispanics, ages 50 to 64, and 34.9 percent of Latino children are covered by Medicaid.

Twenty-seven percent of Hispanics ages 50 to 64 are uninsured and only 33 percent of Latinos with a chronic condition have coverage for prescription drugs. A large numbers of Hispanics, age 65 and older, rely solely on public insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid. The proportion of Hispanics covered by both Medicare and Medicaid is 39 percent, more than five times that of non-Hispanic whites.

### ***Health Care***

The lack of health insurance among a large number of Latinos does not solely explain the disparities they experience with respect to health care. Several sources report that Hispanics and other racial and ethnic populations are less likely to receive even routine health care services as compared to non-Hispanic whites. In view of these disparities Congress requested that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) at the National Academy of Sciences assess the differences in the types and quality of health care that U.S. racial and ethnic minorities received in comparison to non-minorities. The 2002 IOM study discovered that a plethora of factors contribute to racial and ethnic differences in the quality of health care; discrepancies that stem beyond inadequate health care or financial inabilities. Some of the factors are as follows:

- Misdiagnosis or clinical uncertainty resulting from the doctor's inability to communicate with his patient due to cultural and/or linguistic barriers;
- bias and/or prejudice at a variety of levels including health systems, healthcare providers, and utilization managers;

- patient mistrust and/or refusal of treatment, prompting the care giver to provide less vigorous treatments and services;<sup>13</sup>
- inconsistent minority patients-health care provider relationships, due to types of health care systems and the scarce providers located in minority communities;
- enrollment in Medicaid managed care plans which do not ensure: 1) that patients have a stable relationship with their doctor, 2) that the primary care physicians have reasonable patient loads, and 3) that there are adequate time allotments for patient's visits;
- and finally, disruptions of traditional community-based care and displacement of providers, who are familiar with the language, culture, and values of these ethnic minority communities.

All of these factors contribute to lower quality health care for these minorities.

A 2001 study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that as many as 20 percent of Spanish-speaking Latinos did not seek medical care due to language barriers. The California Endowment study from April 2003 stated that without language assistance services, such as medical interpreting and translation of written health information, the quality of health care for Limited English Proficient consumers would greatly suffer. These results further suggest that there is an increased risk of misdiagnosis and misunderstanding with regard to the proper course of treatment, poorer adherence to medication and discharge instructions. The lack of language assistance services not only result in decreased patient satisfaction but it also increases the possibility for medical errors, avoidable complications, increasing health care cost.

However, disparities in health care extend beyond the issue of language. Hispanics, for example, are less likely to receive appropriate cardiac medication or undergo coronary artery bypass surgery. They are also less likely to receive diabetes care, to undergo

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<sup>13</sup> The report stated that although there were a small number of studies that suggested that racial and ethnic minority patients are more likely than white patients to refuse treatment, they also indicated that differences in refusal rates were generally small and that minority patient refusal does not fully explain healthcare disparities.

appropriate cancer diagnostic tests, and less likely to receive hemodialysis and kidney transplants. Unfortunately, they are more likely to receive a lower quality of basic clinical services.

### ***The Working Poor***

Many Hispanics can be classified as working poor. Though they have high levels of employment, they do not necessarily have large incomes. Family size, geographic concentration in large metro areas, high costs of living, scarce affordable housing, and lack of public transportation contribute to the large number of Hispanic working poor. To escape this predicament many Latinos have relocated to suburbs of the large metro areas or to smaller, less congested cities. While the percentage of Latinos living in poverty is fairly high, it is counterbalanced by extended family and children contributing to the overall income of the household.<sup>14</sup>

In September 2002—the Current Population Survey (CPS) report on consumer income and poverty determined that the poverty rate in 2001 was 11.7 percent, 32.9 million, of the population, an 11.3 percent, increase from 2000, 31.6 million.<sup>15</sup> The number of poor Hispanics in the same time period rose from 7.7 million in 2000 to 8.0 million in 2001, 21.4 percent, though the overall rates of poverty remained stable.<sup>16</sup> Twenty-eight percent of Hispanics under 18 who are poor live below the poverty level. Hispanics 65 years and over were 21.8 percent of those who live below poverty.<sup>17</sup> These increases in the poverty

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<sup>14</sup> Regional poverty rates based on the experimental measures established by the U.S. Census differed distinctly from the official poverty rate. Among the geographically adjusted measures, the Northeast and the West had higher poverty rates, while the Midwest and South, contrary to popular belief, had lower poverty rates. These differences by region reflect the lower housing costs in the Midwest and South compared to the Northeast and West. For more information on experimental poverty measures go to [www.census.gov/hhes/www/povmeas.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/povmeas.html).

<sup>15</sup> Poverty is determined by a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition established by the Office of Management and Budget. An individual is considered to be living in poverty if they are making \$9,214 or less and are under 65 years old. If a family's total income is less than a family's threshold, then that family and every member in it is considered poor. For a couple with two children, their threshold is \$14,269/year. For an adult 65 years or over, the threshold is \$8,494/year. For two adults over 65, the threshold is \$10,705. For additional information go to [www.census.gov/hhes/poverty](http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty).

<sup>16</sup> Poverty status also includes those who live below the poverty level.

<sup>17</sup> The poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites was 7.8 percent, 22.7 percent for Blacks, and 10.2 percent for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

rate coincided with the recession that began in March 2001 and is the first year-to-year increase since 1991-1992.<sup>18</sup>

The U.S. Census has developed some experimental poverty measures by selecting characteristics that further disaggregate the data for a more realistic picture poverty. One measure subtracts medical out-of-pocket expenses (MOOP) from out of pocket income combined with geographic area or geographic adjustment (GA), which accounts for geographic differences in housing cost and includes adjustments to thresholds. When MOOP is subtracted from income and when GA is considered, the percent of Hispanics living in poverty rises to 24.4 percent. The second measure increases the poverty thresholds to take MOOP into account instead of subtracting these expenses and allowed for food, clothing, shelter, utilities and MOOP. This measure is called MOOP in the threshold or MIT. When MIT combined with geographic area are taken into consideration then Hispanic poverty rates reach 26.3 percent.<sup>19</sup>

The U.S. Census' experimental measures conclude that Hispanics have higher poverty rates than the official measure. Hispanic poverty rates, considering geographic adjustment suggest that Hispanics tend to live in areas with higher housing costs. Affordable housing is therefore a significant problem for Hispanics. These costs might explain part of the reason why so many are relocating from traditional receiving areas to non-traditional receiving areas such as the south where living expenses such as housing and utilities are lower.

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<sup>18</sup> CPS Report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Poverty in the United States: 2001, The U.S. Census Bureau, pg 15



## EMERGING COMMUNITIES:

### *Cicero, IL: A Suburban Outpost*

Many of the more than one million Latinos who live in the Chicago metropolitan area, have settled in suburban areas like Cicero, where Latinos constitute 77 percent of the community. Cicero grew two and a half times between 1970 and 2000<sup>20</sup> as a result of both immigration and higher than average birth rates. Demographers expect that by the year 2025 more than 16.9 percent of Illinois residents will be Latino. Considering recent trends (i.e., rapid growth) the number of Hispanics in Illinois will probably grow at a much faster pace than predicted.

The 2000 U.S. Census documents that of the 1.5 million Latinos living in Illinois, 1.1 million are of Mexican origin, 158,000 are Puerto Ricans, 18,000 are Cubans, and 210,000 are Latinos from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Of these groups Mexicans were the first to arrive in Illinois as railroad workers who were recruited from the border in 1916 to bust unions and later during World War II to work in the industry.

The town of Cicero, established in 1857, grew quickly in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Known for its large-scale manufacturing operations in areas like steel, printing presses, and locomotive works, the city was bound by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railway line. With a large number of industries in the city, Cicero had a large tax base driving down property tax and attracting working families. The town has had a history of racial strife. It had a large immigrant population with clearly defined ethnic neighborhoods of Italians, Poles, Czechs, and Lithuanians. By the end of the century, the town's heavy manufacturing industries collapsed, jobs were lost, and demographic changes were occurring. The younger European ethnics who left the city were replaced by large numbers of young Latinos. However, conflict arose when elderly households living on a fixed income were expected to contribute to the increasing expenditures for the school systems that taught this young Latino group. Such demographic and cultural differences began to manifest themselves in public policy.

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<sup>20</sup> Institute for Latino Studies. University of Notre Dame. January 2002. *Bordering the Mainstream: A Needs Assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois.*

The percentage of Latinos residing in Cicero has increased by 166 percent since 1990. The Latino population grew 57 percent annually on average between 1980 and 2000.<sup>21</sup> Eighty-eight percent of Cicero's Latinos population is of Mexican descent, many who were born in the state of Texas and migrated to the area as part of the migrant agricultural labor movement. Upon their arrival to the Chicago metro area, however, Latinos tended to leave agriculture and work in manufacturing.

According to the Metropolitan Chicago Information Center, the Latino population in Chicago has an average age of 35, which is slightly older than the median age of Hispanics, 29. Only 52 percent of Latinos in Cicero have a high-school education – many having fewer than six years of formal education – and almost half lack health insurance. A large number of children under 18 come from low-income families – in District 99 Cicero, that number reaches almost 68 percent. Access to health care is an acute problem for Hispanics in Cicero. Contributing to this problem is the failure to comply with Title VI regulations to provide bilingual services in areas where there are high numbers of non-English speakers. This non-compliance is widespread and generally goes unreported. Latinos in Cicero suffer disproportionately from diabetes and tuberculosis. The lack of free clinics is a problem given the low rates of health insurance among the population which coincides with the number of foreign-born. They may get diagnosed but are incapable of obtaining the prescription drugs necessary to cure them.

The Current Population Survey reports 52 percent of Illinois Mexican-origin persons are native born and 48 percent are foreign born. This unique split between native-born and foreign-born in Cicero creates both unique opportunities and challenges for the Hispanic population specifically in regard to relations with Mexico. In effect, this population serves as a source for possible transnational participation in activities sponsored by the Mexican government such as the Instituto de Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME).

This divide, however, somewhat diminishes Latino political power, in that only half of the population are U.S. citizens and of those citizens many are too young and therefore not yet eligible to vote. Another barrier restricting Latino political power is the 1998 decision by the 7<sup>th</sup> US Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that only citizen adults should be counted in drawing political boundaries with census data, instead of the generally

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<sup>21</sup> Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population in Cicero grew by 27 percent. U.S. Census 2000.

accepted method of redrawing boundaries based on the total population. This ruling excludes a critical mass of Latinos, consequently reducing their potential power and input in the community.

Evidence of their reduced capacity is manifested in the Latino community's inability to pass referendums that would raise tax rates for schools, redirect existing bond funds toward schools, and explore the use of tax-increment financing (TIF) mechanisms to provide funding for education. Older non-Latino voters opposed to higher taxes consistently voted against all these referenda. Despite the fact that Latinos are the majority of the population, these older non-Latino voters dominate the public policy arena.<sup>22</sup>

Limited Latino power is also evident in the community's failure, in spite of strong participation, to elect a member to the town trustees until 2003. These officials are elected in town-wide races, preventing those under-represented groups living in enclave neighborhoods from running a viable candidate. Other barriers to block the Latino vote include a 1999 effort to change residency requirements from 12 months to 18 months, a change that conflicted with state law. Not until the Justice Department threatened the town with a lawsuit did Cicero abandon this effort. These instances reveal the town's hostile and insensitive behavior towards the Hispanic community.

Further evidence of the town's treatment of Latinos is displayed by their discriminatory housing policies. Cicero enacted a variety of housing ordinances controlling for population density, parking of cars, subdivision of units and buildings and maintenance conditions. The town passed a retroactive ordinance outlawing certain basement and attic apartments, once considered legal housing units, causing the displacement of a disproportionate number of Latinos. This ordinance directly interfered with Latino living patterns in Cicero. The average Latino household occupancy was 4.4 compared to 2.5 for non-Latinos. Many members of these households work in areas that lack public transportation, requiring them to have cars. Thus, the town's strict parking regulations have negatively impacted the Latino community.

A 2002 study of both Latinos and non-Latinos by the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame reported that:

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<sup>22</sup> Latinos in Illinois have been able to make some changes. In a joint LULAC/MALDEF lawsuit, the community was able to redistrict the map adding eight more Hispanic legislative seats. Personal interview with Ms. Blanca Vargas. LULAC Vice-President for the Midwest. June 2003.

- About 84 percent of Latinos and 76 percent of non-Latinos interviewed in Cicero felt that education was extremely important, but non-Latinos – many of whom are older - do not feel that government expenditures on education should be a high priority;
- Almost all of the respondents stressed the importance of learning English and mentioned the shortage of ESL classes.
- More than 60 percent of Cicero residents said that political representation and participation, health care, children and youth, and immigration were also extremely important;
- Due to a severe shortage of bilingual and Latino teachers/administrators, the school system is struggling with the number of new students and their special language needs;
- Youth gang activity is prevalent in the area, causing a great deal of concern among parents;
- And that there are also pervasive cultural conflicts between immigrant parents and “Americanized” children.

This study also revealed that Latino business owners were highly visible in the Cicero area and had revitalized the once commercially depressed areas. The collapse of manufacturing caused many residents to close their small businesses leaving vacant lots in large parts of the township. Latinos slowly began to fill the gap establishing their businesses in what were considered less-desirable areas where they established a growing tax base. Located to the east of Cicero, 26<sup>th</sup> Street contains a large number of Hispanic-owned businesses, which serves as the second largest source of retail tax revenues for the City of Chicago, second only to Michigan Avenue. Considering the high rate of entrepreneurship demonstrated by Latinos, the Notre Dame report recommended that the city of Chicago and the town of Cicero incubate more local businesses, which are viewed by the Latino community as the best way to enter the middle class. However, these businesses appear to be self-segregating. The Cicero Chamber of Commerce, an organizations dominated by non-Hispanic whites, has been less successful in attracting Hispanic business-owners because they seem to prefer to have their own chamber. This preference for self-segregation is not uncommon among Hispanic communities who tend to divide themselves by national origin as well as birthplace.

Yet, there are still structural roadblocks that diminish the political and economic power of Hispanics living in Cicero. Given the severity of the aforementioned ordinances, relationships between those in power and new Latino have been strained. The Notre Dame Report comments that many Hispanic business-owners are frustrated with the corrupt elements of the township. Though Latinos have come a long way in Cicero in a very short period of time, there is still a vacuum in leadership development, grassroots organizing, education, and public advocacy. Delivery systems of core social services must become more linguistically and culturally competent. Cicero has recently made some great strides in its attitudes.

In 2002, Town President Betty Loren-Maltese had to step down from her seat due to a conviction on racketeering charges. Mexican native Ramiro Gonzalez was unanimously appointed by the town Board of Trustees to replace her. He was duly elected on April 1, 2003 in the general municipal election trouncing another Hispanic candidate. Gonzalez is changing the way business is done in Cicero. Upon taking office as town president, Gonzalez made a commitment to fight crime in the area. He launched a new anti-gang task force, set up auxiliary foot patrols in every neighborhood, and increased membership in the neighborhood watch program. He appointed mob fighter Wayne Johnson, former chief investigator for the Chicago Crime Commission as the new police chief signaling that corruption will not be tolerated in his administration. The police force now has a record 150 members, and since he took the helm, the hiring rate for Hispanics is 55 percent to reflect the community it serves. Gonzalez is a strong advocate for his community and has not forgotten where he came from.

### ***Little Rock AR, (Pulaski County): Lessons in Acculturation***

Little Rock is a traditional southern city in Pulaski County, central Arkansas, where gentility and good manners prevail. Children are to be seen and not heard, and elders are treated with respect. The city of Little Rock, has historically maintained its biases under wraps, with some exceptions, such as the riots over integration and civil rights in the 1960s. Little Rock is not much different from other towns and rural areas of the mid-South where attitudes towards people of color are generally broken down along black and white parameters. The introduction of a new and sizable minority group to the state raised issues regarding the recognition of Latinos as a cognizable group beyond black and white, creating clear, but manageable challenges to community relations among southerners in the area.

Little Rock's experience is fairly unique compared to the rest of the state primarily for two reasons. First, the state officials' careful and proactive management of Little Rock and Pulaski County, in conjunction with the leadership demonstrated by members of the Latino community, has permitted Hispanics to be better absorbed and able to mitigate the resistance to the rapid influx experienced in other parts of the state. Although Arkansas has a relatively low Hispanic population there remains a high percentage of overall growth. Second, the impact that Latinos have had on communities is very visible, particularly in the smaller towns outside of the metropolitan statistical area of Little Rock. Little Rock city's larger size and more diverse composition has permitted a better integration of Latinos into the overall community.

The official U.S. Census 2000 numbers state that Pulaski County contains some 8,816 Hispanics or 2.4 percent of the population, out of a total population of 361,474. Residents of the area argue that the numbers are inaccurate and it is universally acknowledged in the region that there were severe census undercounts because of under-compliance. Researchers from the Institute for Economic Advancement at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock estimate that there are at least 20,000 Hispanics, mostly of Mexican origin, in Pulaski County. About 8,000 of these are located directly in Little Rock, in a neighborhood called Wakefield in Southwest Little Rock and in mid to west

Little Rock in a neighborhood called John Barrow. There is also a significant population of Hispanics in North Little Rock, a separate township.<sup>23</sup>

The Hispanic population, in Little Rock and outlying areas, is fairly young with a larger number of males than females over the age of 25. Most of this population consists of transitory single men who, through migration networks of family members and associates from their hometown, have been able to find jobs in construction, timber, and other industries such as poultry. These new arrivals, who originally come from Mexico and Central America, journey through traditional gateways, such as Chicago, Houston, or Los Angeles. Many Latino families choose to settle in areas like the mid-south because of job opportunities, better schools, and safer neighborhoods. This demand for labor results from native Arkansans abandoning low-paying, low-skilled jobs for higher ones, thereby creating vacancies for Latinos to fill.<sup>24</sup> Because many of the Latino residents of Little Rock are concentrated in these low paying jobs their median household income of \$33,068 is substantially lower than the state average of \$47,446.

Although Arkansas offers better educational opportunities compared to other states, there is still a great deal of room for improvement. There are more than 900 Latino students enrolled in local schools, the highest concentration of which, are in grades 1-8. More than 10 percent of those students are Limited English Proficiency (LEP). About 37 percent of the population 5 years and older are Spanish dominant and thus require English-language training. Almost 50 percent of males over the age of 25 have less than a high-school degree, while approximately 29 percent of the women over the age of 25 have less than a high-school degree. Many of these are seeking to improve their economic outlook and are more likely to look for educational opportunities in both the English language and further skills-development.

One unique phenomenon in Little Rock has been the growth of countless small businesses, *mercados*, and *tiendas* that are owned by women, whose partners work in the poultry and construction industries. Many of the Latinas who formed these businesses do

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<sup>23</sup> The local Cinco de Mayo festivities serve as a type of bellwether of the size of the Hispanic community. In its first year, 1999, Cinco de Mayo organizers expected no more than 500 people and were shocked when 4,000 arrived. The numbers grew from year to year. By 2000 there were 8,000 attendees and planned attendance was for 6,000. In 2001, its third year, attendance grew to 13,000. In 2002-2003 attendance reached a peak of 22,000.

not have a traditional business background and have hired a workforce that is primarily female. In response to their demands for education and training, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and SERCO – the for profit arm of SER Jobs for Progress – are partnering with Pulaski Tech to provide instruction with a day care center through the Nuestra Familia education program’s initial pilot in Little Rock. Bus route services will be provided to take the women to and from school to learn English, get their GED, and develop computer skills.

While the emergence of the Hispanic population has been somewhat recent, the city of Little Rock was quick to recognize their presence. In the mid-1990s Latino leaders, including LULAC officials, conveyed their concern about Hispanic issues to all levels of government: city, county and state. Former Governor Guy Tucker, responding to these concerns, formed a Hispanic task force. This advisory board consisting of 25 volunteers, ranging from industries and agencies around the state, conducted a year long study to identify problems and opportunities of the rapidly growing Latino population.

The Governor’s Task Force on Hispanic Relations focused on the needs of the community by strategically placing Hispanic on boards and commissions to make decisions impacting local government. Then, these boards and commissions were used as a “bully pulpit” to ensure that issues affecting the Latino community received proper attention. The task force focused on three critical issues: criminal justice and law enforcement, health, and education. The three issue areas were chosen because of the impact the rapid growth of the Latino community had on these public service delivery systems. The board, after a year long state wide assessment of the Latino and Non-Hispanics community needs, presented their final proposal to state legislators and Governor Mike Huckabee in 1998.<sup>25</sup> The report formed a baseline regarding the current status of the community and where it needed to go. This report documented numerous social problems facing the Latino Community in Arkansas, including cultural and language

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<sup>24</sup> Green, Andrew A. September 4, 1998. “Arkansas Leads U.S. in Surge of Hispanics.” *Arkansas-Democrat Gazette*.

<sup>25</sup> When Governor Huckabee took over office from Governor Guy Tucker who had been convicted of felonies, he stated that it was not his administration’s policy to step in and make suggestions unless counties and local governments express concern to his office. “Whether or not we need a study commissioned, I don’t have that information...if [the task force] had all these meetings and never produced a report, then maybe that’s the most glaring answer.” Plunkett, Chuck. July 13, 1997. “Hispanic Relations Study, Group Lost in Shuffle.” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.



barriers in schools, health care, and grass-root social and political organizing that were impeding the community from achieving economic stability.<sup>26</sup>

This report not only documented the needs of the Hispanic community, but it also monitored the services provided by, and the needs of the local police, sheriff's departments, and state police. In the mid-to-late 90s many rural police departments failed to address the needs of the Latino communities, growing throughout the state. Though police departments denied any mistreatment, evidence suggest that there have been a number of incidents where local, municipal, sheriff deputies, and to some extent, State Police have racially profiled the Hispanic community. Despite this statewide problem, there was limited profiling in Little Rock. There, the city's police force have established a relationship and dialogue with the Hispanic community and are therefore more sensitive to and conscience of issues in the Latino population. However, those cities and towns with passive Latino populations were most likely to experience community-relations problems with the local police departments.<sup>27</sup>

In 2002, the Latino community also assisted the State Police Commander in forming a racial profiling task force. The result of the process was a set of guidelines and procedures that the State Police Commissioners have made a commitment to adopt in 2003. Some of the most notable changes include instituting specifications that require the State Police Department to mirror the physical placement of cameras in cars and modify the procedure that the Arkansas State Police use to stop people and gather their information after the stop. Though expensive, the community believes that these measures are essential in determining who is stopped and why. The other major issue about the report is that it provides a template for local police and sheriff departments to prevent

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> To minimize problems, local LULAC chapters have recently agreed to partner with the Little Rock and North Little Rock police departments. Police officers have even begun joining LULAC in order to be part of decisionmaking process in the Latino community. LULAC agreed to assist by helping the police department directly. Approximately \$60,000 was raised at the 2003 Cinco de Mayo festivities. The police department agreed to provide free security at the event and in return LULAC agreed to pay for a one year Spanish and cultural competency class at the Little Rock Police Academy. The teacher is paid out of the Cinco de Mayo funds and the plan is to raise more money, in order to send higher level officers to go to Spanish and cultural immersion programs in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The City of Little Rock will pay the salary of the officers for one month and in exchange LULAC will pay for at least one scholarship and more as money is raised. The proposal is currently under consideration by the City Manager. Letter dated May 19, 2003 between LULAC State Director Bob Trevino and Lawrence Johnson, Chief of Police, Little Rock Police Department.

racial profiling and provide accurate data. Although the State Police Commissioner, promises to heed the recommendation of the report, presented on May 1, 2003, he has yet to sign it. However, once these reforms are initiated they will assist with lawsuits, hold police entities accountable, and serve as a template for local police and sheriff's office to follow.

As a part of the Little Rock plan of action, the police department is currently partnering with LULAC to assist with their recruiting drives as well as helping them with recruitment for 911 operators. It has made arrangements to establish a six-month Citizen's Police Academy made up of Hispanic business owners with trained police officers as part of its community outreach efforts. The academy allows for the community to take lighter police courses that guide people through a condensed version of police academy with community relations. In the coming summer, a Citizen's Police Academy will also be conducted for Latino youth – with the idea of pulling in high school and college age Latinos to learn about law enforcement and consider it as a possible career choice. The fairly recent programs will go into effect 2003 when the first classes will begin.

Despite their progress on a number of issues, Latinos in Arkansas have health care problems that mirror the nation's. Health care delivery systems in Little Rock tend to be dominated by small group and solo-physician practices. Arkansas' general population is predisposed to poor health status in part because of the established link between race/ethnicity on the one hand, and the relatively low median income on the other. The number of Hispanics who are under-insured or uninsured around the state is very high. Rates of success in terms of getting Latinos insured have not been particularly successful. The city does suffer overall from high morbidity rates related to high levels of substance abuse, hypertension, diabetes, and sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, it has a significant problem in maternal and child health: Little Rock's overall infant mortality rates is almost 10 percent higher than the national average and it is thought to be related to the high teenage pregnancy rates and low levels of prenatal care compared with U.S. norms. Latinas are particularly hard-hit because of a lack of access to health care.

In the early to mid-90s, hospitals and clinics in the area did not have health care workers who were bilingual in the emergency rooms. As the Latino population grew, it

was clear that it was necessary to change. The major hospitals were urged by the community to hire Hispanics. They initially responded by hiring custodial staff, which was clearly unacceptable. Federal Title VI rules were basically ignored and/or under-reported. In a very short period of time, the needs of the community were outpacing the capacity of the hospitals to service Latinos. In response, the two major hospitals – Baptist Health and St. Vincent Infirmiry – eventually formed Hispanic committees to develop strategies on serving the Hispanic population from hiring administrative and medical personnel and ways of advertising their services. Resources continue to be a problem.

In an attempt to provide additional resources to the Hispanic community, local churches have established volunteer clinics in Hispanic neighborhoods, like Wakefield. In the case of Wakefield, doctors, nurses, and health care providers offer free assessments and when necessary, refer patients to other health care providers. Building on the foundation of this community, Latino leaders are attempting to form culturally competent care network. The Arkansas Minority Physicians and Dentists Association (AMPDA) assists in this process by providing reasonably priced, if not free, care.

One of the more successful efforts to remedy health care concerns has been the Latinos community's partnerships with non-profits and health care professionals. For example *Step-Up* is a well-established, non-profit, community based organization located in Wakefield that uses tobacco cessation funds<sup>28</sup> to identify health needs in the Latino community. In addition to referring Latinos to a "health network of care," the program provides after school care, education programs, and drug and alcohol counseling for adults and teens, as well as teen pregnancy counseling.

The Hispanic community in Wakefield is beginning to get organized. There are currently efforts to renovate a park in Wakefield using a combination of public and private funds. Moneys for beautification would come from private donors and the city will do the actual renovations. The community is in the process of forming a Hispanic neighborhood association for which Sen. Blanche Lincoln's offices have offered to look at federal funding possibilities. The idea is to create a neighborhood leadership core that will take

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<sup>28</sup> Little Rock received between \$2 and \$3 million dollars in a tobacco settlement. The city formed a grant process and supervises disbursement through the governor's office and the state Department of Health to ensure that minority communities receive an adequate portion of money. Fifteen percent of the moneys go directly to minority communities especially those are medically under-served areas like Wakefield.

care of the community and be in touch with the community. If this effort is successful, it will bring accountability from city hall and build community leadership.<sup>29</sup>

Little Rock's Latino community is also in the process of creating a Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. This chamber, the first of its kind to cover the entire state, will unveil a workforce strategy in the fall of 2003 that will offer English language acquisition programs, information on business management, and help Latinos improve their computer skills. A Latina owned-business, Aristotle Internet service provider, will host the Chamber's first meeting where the members will sign the organization's charter. The primary mission of this association is to provide access to capital and help Hispanic entrepreneurs develop effective business plans to attract capital. It will also educate the Latino community about banking and financial services to better understand credit, home ownership, and the best practices to guarantee success as entrepreneur.

Although the impact on Little Rock and Pulaski County has been profound, it is not as visible as the experience in the northwestern part of the state where towns are smaller and though the numbers of Hispanics are relatively small, they are very visible. There have been problems in small towns like Rogers, AK where anti-immigrant sentiment has been expressed in the formation of a group called Americans for an Immigration Moratorium (AIM). The members of this organization claim that they are not anti-immigrant but, heavy flows of immigrants into a community can be damaging – fostering more crime, poorer schools and lower property values. Their creed is that the number of the immigrants in the area is too high and needs to be slowed so that those who have already arrived can adjust to American culture which they are afraid will be lost. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) sued the city of Rogers, AK for regularly racially profiling the Hispanic community by police officers.

Latinos in Arkansas and particularly in Little Rock have created a unique situation for themselves in comparison to other emerging communities. Though some areas have experienced backlashes, for the most part, Latinos are quietly integrating themselves into the fabric of the bucolic Arkansas lifestyle. In contrast to the rest of the state, the City of Little Rock is becoming a cosmopolitan metropolis with a Latino flair all its own. The

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<sup>29</sup> The neighborhood association will work with police officers to get to know the people and reduce fear in the community. The police department understands that immigration issues are for the federal agencies. They are just there to protect community.

political will demonstrated by both local and state officials in the state capital has helped to integrate the newcomers into the area. Latino leaders have grown their own leaders to determine the needs of their community and to find creative, proactive solutions to any problems that are arising. By maintaining an ongoing dialogue with law enforcement officials, educators, and health service providers, the Latino residents of Little Rock are creating a fluid and progressive dynamic unusual in many cities. The LRPD's has established a clear plan of action, which acknowledges the new sets of needs and challenges unique to traditional law enforcement. The willingness of the department to adapt to the changes now represented by the inclusion of the Hispanic community into the general population of the city sets an example for emerging communities nationwide. Although Little Rock will definitely face challenges in the years to come as the population continues its upward growth cycle, the seeds have been planted for a new style of community relations.

## *Orlando, FL: A Study in Hypergrowth*

The Orlando<sup>30</sup> metro area presents a multitude of contrasts and contradictions. Though the area has experienced a heavy growth of Hispanics, the community has yet to define itself politically. The mixture of immigrants, Latino transplants from other states and migrants from the island of Puerto Rico has created a diverse and rich environment whose potential grows daily. Between 1980 and 2000, the Orlando metro area grew 859 percent – Latinos now represent 17 percent of the total population. Orlando is one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the country and the fifth largest new destination for Hispanics.<sup>31</sup> With a growth rate surpassing 300 percent, Orlando is one of 18 of the new Latino destination metro areas in the United States considered a hypergrowth zone.<sup>32</sup> A May 2003 supplemental report from the U.S. Census estimated that in 2001, Orlando added 347 people a day, with one in five coming from another country, and more than 500 families a week, totaling an increase of 126,787 people per year.<sup>33</sup> According to the Orlando Sentinel, approximately 500 new Hispanic families move into the area each week. Orlando has become a magnet in Central Florida transforming it from a sleepy rural town into a diverse urban metro center.

Despite these significant efforts of the U.S. Census to obtain an accurate count of the community, a number of obstacles introduced considerable speculation as to whether or not the account of the city's dynamic population movement is accurate. While the U.S. Census got a significant snapshot, they were able to document certain dynamics, unique to Orlando, that have evolved over a very short period of time. The information captured by the census changes daily. There are a variety of factors that affected census taking in Orlando. One important factor is how the population is formulated and prevailing attitudes in the area. Puerto Ricans are the largest Hispanic national origin group, representing 56 percent of Orlando Hispanics population. A significant number of this population group travel regularly between the city and the island, spending part of the year in Orlando and

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<sup>30</sup> The Orlando metro area includes portions of Orange, Seminole, Osceola and Lake Counties.

<sup>31</sup> Of the Orlando metro area total population of 1.6 million, 271,425 are Hispanic, compared with 1.07 million whites, 216,779 blacks, 41,885 Asians, and 4,592 native-Americans. U.S. Census.

<sup>32</sup> Suro, Roberto. July 2002. *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations*. Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center. The Brookings Institution.

the other part in Puerto Rico. Another factor that affected data collection was the Hispanic community's response to the U.S. Census' choice of definitions. In its efforts to capture as many Hispanics as possible, the U.S. Census expanded the terminology to include Chicano/Latino/ Hispanic, etc. Many Hispanic respondents answered white, thus their real numbers were not captured. Another reason for the undercount is that the census deadline of April 1<sup>st</sup> prohibits the census takers from counting those people who return to Orlando for the summer. This surge occurs in the summertime after the school season has ended. Another disparity in the census numbers stem from people who refuse to be counted, namely the undocumented. One census-taker simply stated that many in the Latino community in Orlando do not understand the purpose of the census, particularly how it helps determine federal resource allocation and redistricting. A final though relatively small factor that biases the populations downward is the small segment of the population that considers itself strictly Puerto Rican and therefore does not see a need to participate.

The U.S. Census 2000 information indicates that Orlando is a city of many ethnic origins. Though more than half of the population is Puerto Rican, there are many Orlando residents who come from Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and other South and Central American nations. Unlike many emerging Hispanic communities in the country, Latino adults in the Orlando metro area tend to have more formal education. Of the 154,282 Latino adults 25 and over, in the Orlando metro area, only around 44,000, about 28 percent, do not have a high school degree or GED equivalency and approximately 46 percent of this group had at least some college education. However, Latinas were slightly more likely than Hispanic men to pursue higher education. Of Latinas 25 and over, 39,958 had at least some college, compared to only 33,290 of Hispanic men.

Considering this rapid influx of younger people, the school system has reached a critical mass. The rapid arrival of so many needy students surprised educators and as a result these officials were slow to accommodate the large number of Hispanic children. Almost one-third of the Hispanic population in Orlando is under 20 and 12 percent of these young people are under the age of 10. About 5,300 of Latino children between the ages of 5 and 17 do not speak English well or at all and require ESL education in school. English

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<sup>33</sup> Of the 27,892 new residents who moved to metro Orlando from abroad, 24,072 were foreign-born. The other 3,820 were from Puerto Rico. U.S. Census 2000 data.

as a Second Language programs (ESL) are understaffed and, on average, take about five to six years in getting LEP children to full English language proficiency. The English only movement is becoming an issue in the community at large. There are factions of parents who insist their child learn English even at the cost of abandoning Spanish. This attitude contrasts with those who advocate that children should learn English as a Second language or have bilingual education. This knobby question of language is just one of the many educational problems confronting of Orlando's Hispanic youth. In the 1990s the Latino student body almost doubled in size. Area schools have been unable to adjust to this growth the school and as a result there is not enough transportation, books, and teachers for the students. For example, at one point University High School, designed for about 2000 students, suffered from severe overcrowding, with the number of students reaching over 4,300. Operating at this capacity the school had to break into four sections for lunch with the first one being at 9:15 am. In order to accommodate this overflow the area built another school; it was only after this school was built that the students were able to eat lunch at a reasonable hour. Because of the school's systems scarce resources many students are simply encouraged to go find work rather than continue their education. As a result of this mind-set, many of the older students who struggle with their studies decide to drop out of high school and even those who remain in school do not view college as a viable option.

Orlando Latino activists have been pressing the Orange County school system to fully implement the rulings established by the LULAC vs. Florida Department of Education case. In 1990, the state of Florida passed the Florida META Consent Decree to ensure that school districts in Florida guarantee that there be "comprehensible" instruction information for all students in K-12 within the public school system. Latino community activists have been strongly engaged with the area schools to ensure that principals are implementing the law and using the state and federal Title III funds allocated for English language acquisition appropriately. Currently, out of approximately 150 schools, only 25 percent are participating. Dr. James Lawson, the Associate Superintendent of Schools in Multilingual Services has been a strong supporter of parents who are pressing the schools to fully implement the consent decree. But, challenges remain and though dropout rates have lowered, there are still too many children leaving school.



Many Latinos, in addition to the good weather, move to the area for its decent living conditions. However, once they arrived they are often shocked by the lax labor protections. Hispanic's living in the region primarily work in low-wage service jobs and therefore have incomes that are lower than average. The median household income for Hispanics in Orlando is \$34,093, compared to \$51,576 for whites. The median family income rate for Hispanics living in Florida is slightly higher, totaling \$35,350 per year. A large majority of the jobs, because they are in the service sector, are based on hourly wages averaging about \$5.75-6.00 per hour. As a result low wages there are many Hispanics who are considered part of the working poor; about 11,500, 19 percent, of Latino children between the ages of 5 and 17 live in households below the poverty level out of a total population of 60,580 students in the Orlando School system.

In addition to low wages, is that Florida is a right to work state. This designation means that state has fairly weak labor laws, thus rules of a right to work state tend to favor the business owners. In comparison to other states, the owner has more leverage in his/her ability to hire and fire his/her employees; for example, the owner does not have to justify why he/she dismisses his/her employees.<sup>34</sup> These weak labor laws inhibit the Hispanic community's ability to protect themselves, making for a more docile work force.

There are differing perspectives on how the police departments, fire departments and other emergency services have dealt with the influx of Latinos in Orlando. The Orlando Police Department is in a nascent stage in its community-relations efforts with Latinos throughout the metropolitan area. However, complicating this relationship is the fact that the Orlando metropolitan area is composed of many smaller divisions and towns such as Kissimmee and Osceola where the Latino community has experienced discriminatory practices such as racial profiling.<sup>35</sup>

It is only recently that the City of Orlando has taken strong action in the recruitment of Latino and Spanish speaking fire department personnel, Emergency Medical

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<sup>34</sup> For example, if a woman gets pregnant, she does not necessarily receive paid maternity leave, even if she were to work for a government agency. She is allowed to take the leave and is entitled to keep her job after taking three months off, as a result of federal law in the form of the passage of the Family Medical Leave Act passed in the 1990s.

<sup>35</sup> Although this is an anecdotal statement, it is worth taking into account. One of the community activists interviewed for this paper stated that on an occasion when she was speaking to a state trooper he indicated to her that he was going flag hunting. Many Hispanics put their country's flag on the windshield. The troopers then pull over those cars with flags and harass the passengers.

Technicians (EMTs), police officers and 911 emergency operators. There is much to do yet for the Latino community in Orlando and the mind-set necessary for change has not completely permeated the whole system yet. For example, there are barely any 911 emergency operators who are bilingual. It has been difficult for the community to attract and then retain them, despite the fact that the city has engaged in a massive campaign. The operators do not get a premium for speaking both languages and this contributes to their low retention rates.

Latinos are a relatively new segment of the police officer population. Few Hispanics are in the middle management level and upper ranks, where they might be able to help increase the number of Latinos in the department. While there is a Hispanic Assistant Police Chief, a Latino recruiter, and a Spanish-language web-site promoting jobs in public service, there are only 85 Latino police officers in this rapidly expanding Latino community. To compensate for this scarcity, the police department has made efforts to place the Hispanic policemen in community policing initiatives to match the police with the cultures of the communities. In April 2003, the department held its first Spanish-language Citizen's Police Academy in an effort to build a bridge between the department and the community. Many of the individuals who have recently settled in the Orlando area are unfamiliar with the norms and customs of local laws and community-law enforcement department relations, making this form of community out-reach so important.

The challenges for increasing the number of officers and growing outreach to the community lies in the city's current struggle, given a deficit in part created because of newly established the antiterrorism focus. Positions in both the police and fire departments are coveted. There is fierce competition for the few available positions. Even further increasing the level of selectivity is that in order to apply for one of these positions, the applicant must have a college degree. However a number of vacancies are expected to open up in the next few years when current officers reach their retirement age; for example projections suggest that by 2005, 30 percent of the fire department personnel will retire.

In terms of Health care the State of Florida is experiencing a general medical crisis. As a result state legislature needs seriously overhaul the state's medical system. There is considerable evidence of this crisis in the Central Florida area. Just recently, the mayor and county supervisor had to intervene to stop the only trauma center in Central Florida, –

the Orlando Regional Medical Center Trauma Center – which services seven counties from leaving the area. The problem is two-fold. On the one hand, the hospitals are unable to post a profit in part because the malpractice insurance rates for doctors have tripled. As a result there is an out-migration of doctors. On the other hand, a large number of residents in the Orlando area do not have medical insurance and are therefore unable pay for services. Hispanics are particularly affected because they are under-employed in the services and hospitality industries and as a result they are uninsured and under-insured. Hispanic professional are also part of this group. Disney – a major employer for Hispanics in the area – has been particularly hard-hit by the recession and fears of a terrorist attack. Thus it had to cut back on the number of full-time employees and corresponding benefits leaving many of their employees uninsured.

In August of 2002, The Florida Hospital sponsored its first health-care disparity summit to find ways to remove barriers to better care for minority patients. Culturally competent access to health care is a very new concept in health delivery systems in the Orlando area. The Secretary of the Florida Department of Health, Dr. John Agwunobi, discussed the extent to which stereotypes and biases have affected health delivery throughout the state of Florida. The conference also compared the care received by minority patients with that of whites with similar economic backgrounds, insurance, disease type, and seeing the same doctor, and concluded that minority patient were less likely to receive the same quality of health care.

Mirroring national trends in health care disparities, the Orlando summit found the following disparities in Orlando health care delivery: minorities were less likely to be placed on waiting lists for organ donor transplants; less likely to receive key diagnostic tests for diabetes, strokes, or cancer; less likely to receive state of the art treatments for HIV/AIDS; and less likely to be given appropriate heart medications or undergo bypass surgery or angioplasty. Other barriers include the costs of doctor visits and prescription drugs; lack of insurance; lack of transportation; and difficulty in finding a culturally and linguistically competent doctor.<sup>36</sup> Barriers in language and communication barriers have resulted in the misdiagnosis of many patients.

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<sup>36</sup> In 1999, the Winter Park Health Foundation and Community Health Improvement Council surveyed 1,400 people in the Orlando metro area including Orange, Seminole, and Osceola counties.

This bleak picture becomes even more dismal when considering that emergency rooms are over-used and that the wait-time can last as long as 12 hours. There are also no public hospitals or health care facilities in the area. This absence of facilities, in addition to high rates of uninsured Latinos, explains why Latinos wait until the last minute to go to the hospital and do not engage in routine preventive practices. Ironically, even when individuals have insurance, they find it difficult to get an appointment right away. New Walgreen's, Eckerd's and CVS pharmacy stores have opened on every street corner in the area, indicating that because of a lack of testing and treatment, many individuals in the community self-medicate. The problem is particularly acute in the undocumented and farmworker populations. Many Latinos refuse to be tested because they lack access to treatment and would therefore rather remain ignorant than find out that they are seriously ill.

Hispanics, however, have a lot to gain in the medical field, especially the professionals. The Florida Department of Health is allowing accredited nurses practicing in Puerto Rico to receive accreditation in Florida. Medical institutions are starting to realize that it is important to ensure that there are culturally competent doctors and personnel in their hospitals. In addition to boosting the nursing population, hospitals are recruiting doctors, who unlike non-Hispanics tend to stay in the state where they are recruited.

Despite these advancements there are still a number of shortcomings. Many hospitals are hiring translators without medical experience. According to a Florida Hospital Issues Brief dated August 2002, these language and cultural barriers are creating problems in communication with doctors. Patients are dissatisfied with the care because they are convinced that the doctor is not paying attention to their needs. Many patients feel inhibited to discuss their problems because of their cultural beliefs. These problems are not limited only to care and prevention, they are also reflected in the lack of in-depth data and research on Latinos in the area.

Orlando area health care practitioners are exploring possible partnership with the purpose of creating a Minority Health Institute, which would expand opportunities for community collaboration, education, and research. These practitioners are looking to identify funding sources, as well as to identify and disseminate best practices. They are working with government and agency associates to enhance health services access for

minorities and seeking to partner in and facilitate the implementation of disease-specific health programs.

The Latino senior population is also experiencing a number of problems. Many older Hispanics do not qualify for Medicare and Medicaid under the current guidelines. The guidelines for income brackets are obsolete and are not on par with the economic and regional reality of the area. For example, in Florida it is necessary to have a car because public transportation is virtually non-existent. The current guidelines consider car ownership a luxury and count it against the individual when he applies for coverage. Furthermore, there is little, if any, attention devoted to the mental health of Latino seniors. Many Latino families care for their elderly parents, yet these seniors are often left alone for most of the day, without any social interaction. As a result many of the Latino seniors are becoming depressed. In May 2003, LULAC partnered with Latino Leadership, a local Hispanic community based organization, to create a technology center. Over 500 people called to register for classes. Most of them were elderly Latinos who were sitting alone at home and needed something to do.

Although housing is plentiful in Orlando, Hispanic home ownership lags behind the rest of the nation. Many Hispanics are trapped in transitional housing and are paying more in rent than they would pay if they were to purchase a home. After the Miami market, Orlando has the largest number of rental apartment availability of any other city in Florida. A significant number of Latinos working in the service sector are living in apartment dwellings. The community recognizes that home ownership is one of the pathways towards building equity. However there are few, if any, organizations that help Hispanics learn about the means to home ownership, whether it be informing them how to get a credit history or how save for a down payment. The only organization that provides home ownership classes in Spanish offers one class, every Saturday, to an average 25 families.

There is a four to five year waiting list for Section 8 housing in the area. The process is long, usually requiring applicants to stay over night to fill out the forms, and does not guarantee, even after filling out the forms, that their application will be approved and the applicant will get the housing. The banks are also not helping community-based organizations (CBOs) to boost Hispanics for home ownership. It is difficult for Latino CBOs, who try to increase home ownership for Hispanics, to apply for a grant from the

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for housing from the county. The county has argued that there is no need for a Hispanic housing CBO because African American organizations are addressing the needs of the minority community. As a result, limited federal funds remain in the same circle of primarily African-American CBOs. With the boom of the Hispanic community, there is now a need for social services and agencies that are unique to Hispanics.

Hispanics have overtaken the African-American community in sheer number; Latinos in the Orlando metropolitan area number 271,425, compared to 216,779 for Blacks. The African-American community has begun to express concern about Latino growth. They fear that Latinos will overtake them politically and ignore their community's needs.

Beyond social service delivery systems, the most pressing need of the Hispanic community in Orlando is the integration and political empowerment of the new arrivals. The Puerto Rican population is the largest and yet their transitory living pattern has stalled them from establishing permanent roots in Orlando. Activism has been very poor in the Puerto Rican community, with low voter turn out, little representation, and apathy towards the political process. The Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration (PRFAA) tried to address this low voter turnout, and in 2002 tried a voter registration campaign to register the Puerto Rican community in Orlando to vote.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the Puerto Ricans lag behind in terms of political representation. Whereas other Hispanic national origins are in well-established positions, the Puerto Rican population is still distilling its leadership.

There appears to be a wide consensus that there are problems with unity in the Hispanic community. Despite, considerable challenges in terms of language and cultural barriers, Orlando has not really experienced any major crisis affecting Latinos. Orlando Hispanics have yet to witness a backlash that would cause them to depend on one another for support. Although there is racial profiling, it occurs in smaller rural towns that are mostly outside of the Orlando metropolitan area. Discrimination is exhibited more subtly and is primarily based on accents and language. For example, many businesses do not allow people to speak Spanish because it makes the English speakers uncomfortable. There

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<sup>37</sup> The target states for PRFAA were Florida and New York where they registered close to 70,000 voters in both states.

are elements in place in Orlando that other emerging communities do not have, which mitigate activism, such as access to higher education and steady employment even if it is in the service sector – in the Disney area.

Another barrier to effecting unity of the Orlando Hispanic community is the competition among the different national origins. The Puerto Ricans have an advantage over immigrant groups because they already are U.S. citizens and therefore can be very mobile. Puerto Ricans are in a unique position to lead the way for the rest of the community in achieving the American dream because they have rights that the rest of the community has yet to acquire. In comparison, Cubans who were the first to settle in Orlando, have been established for a long time are also in positions of power. Essentially, a pecking order has been established within the Latino community. The large influx of Colombians is falling into second place behind the Cubans, in part because they have access to capital. These two groups tend to be more conservative and are mostly Republicans. The Puerto Rican community is divided between those northeastern transplants, mostly Democrats, and factions that remain undecided and could prove to become a significant swing vote. Many of the recently arrived minorities from Central and South America are out-migrating elites who have some resources and some status to also become influential in the political arena.

Many Latinos, particularly the wealthier populations originating from Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela come to establish businesses and/or find work, seeking a better life given the poor economic conditions and violence currently being experienced in their native countries. Many of the Puerto Rican nationals are also seeking business opportunities. Most of these families are college-bound two income households. As a result of the relative wealth of a large percentage of the population, retailers are catering to Latinos. From a consumer perspective, the numbers have increased significantly and Latin American and Puerto Rican corporations have responded. Five years ago, Banco Popular established a branch in Orlando to respond to the rapid growth of the Puerto Rican market in the area. Another company, the *Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples*, a Puerto Rican insurance credit union and financial organization, also opened offices in response to the growth of the Puerto Rican exodus. Even higher education institutions view Orlando as a

place of opportunity. The Ana G. Mendez University – a well-known school for business – will for the first time in its history, open a campus off the island.

Local businesses in the Orlando metro area have also begun to respond to the growing economic power of Latinos in the area. Most of the Hispanic population over 5 years of age in the Orlando metro area is bilingual and a significant number speak only English, around 35,000. In an effort to capitalize on the rapid growth of the Spanish-speakers in the Hispanic community, Orlando Sentinel Communications, which publishes the Orlando Sentinel, unveiled plans in 2001 to issue a weekly bilingual publication for the Central Florida region - “*El Sentinel*.” The paper is oriented towards Hispanics issues and interest, with more international news and greater focus on Puerto Rico. It began circulation in August, giving away 60,000 copies free of charge and created an Internet site [elSentinel.com](http://elSentinel.com) along with the paper.

Univision and Telemundo television stations have located in Orlando. There are now five new weekly newspapers that are less than five years old, but there is still no Spanish-language daily paper. There are more than 12,000 Hispanic-owned businesses in Central Florida with almost \$960 million in sales receipts. Ninety percent of these are small businesses demonstrating the high levels of entrepreneurship in the community.<sup>38</sup> Orlando was the first municipality in the country to have a Spanish language website for Hispanic small business owners. The portal established in June 2001.<sup>39</sup> – *Orlando Centro Empresarial* – is similar to that of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and is a one-stop shop. But, entrepreneurship also carries with it a high cost; many Latinos who come to start their businesses fail and lose all of their earnings. The same ideas that work in their hometown do not necessarily work in Orlando.

The area’s rapid Hispanic growth has not gone unnoticed by state political candidates. During the 2002 gubernatorial elections, candidates from both parties underscored the importance of the region making multiple stops to address Latinos. The two-tone nature of the Orlando population – retirees vs. young emerging community – has

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<sup>38</sup> Forty-seven percent of these are in services; 17 percent are in the retail trade; nine percent are in construction and eight percent are in the areas of finance, insurance and real estate. Seven percent these businesses are unclassified.

<sup>39</sup> The registered name of the site is Orlando en Espanol and is a subset of [www.cityoforlando.net](http://www.cityoforlando.net).



created challenges for both political parties. A bulk of the population is retirement bound and living on a fixed income. Adverse to increased taxation, they refuse to pay for the education of the young people. Despite constant opposition, Orlando was finally able to pass a half-cent sales tax for schools. Now, the city is preparing for a battle on a half-cent tax for transportation.

The Orlando Hispanic community is struggling to find its voice and to create its own identity. Similar to other emerging communities around the country, it is experiencing growing pains - trying to run, before it has learned how to walk. The relative dispersal of the community across a wide geographic area has contributed to the formation of Latino ethnic enclaves that do not always have an opportunity to interact. The migration patterns of the community, particularly of the Puerto Rican community, are clearly inhibiting stronger permanent settlement and political involvement. Because they are the largest population group and have the advantage of U.S. citizenship, they have an opportunity to galvanize all Latinos to become involved in their community.

There is already some evidence that indeed this is occurring particularly in the area of education. However, given the critical problems with the health care system and the criminal justice system, more work needs to be done across ethnic lines in the areas of leadership training, culturally and linguistically competent services, and advocacy. The levels of education of the Latino community in Orlando gives it a definite advantage and opens the door for greater opportunities to shorten the time lag between needs assessments and provision of services. Community relations need to be taken seriously to ensure that unnecessary tensions between Latinos and African-American are diminished. Unless Latinos take the reins of decision-making into their own hands, the community's needs could get lost in the shuffle of overall metropolitan growth. Lack of political cohesion and unity could keep this diamond in the rough from shining as brightly as its potential.

## **Conclusion**

This report reveals a portrait of the widespread growth and creation of a new Hispanic America. The 2000 U.S. Census was more successful in capturing how many Latinos are living in this country. But, what also stands out is that it is very difficult to obtain a truly full portrait of this population group given its high mobility rates and cultural idiosyncrasies. As the fastest growing population in the United States today, Latinos are no longer limited to the 10 largest metropolitan areas in the country. They are demonstrating new patterns of dispersal, moving from large cities into suburbs and new areas such as the mid-South. The patterns of growth are variegated and dynamic in the three cities that were chosen for this analysis, yet when compared certain trends stand out.

It is clear that the first places where the impact is felt in the receiving community is in the areas of education and health care delivery systems, followed closely by emergency services and law enforcement. But, the impacts are not necessarily negative. Latinos have also brought back to life many towns that were economically depressed revitalizing small business enterprise areas that had been stagnant for long periods of time. The picture painted by these three cities is one of contrast and complexity that is dependent on the size of the influx, the local political and governmental environment, and the ability of the community to organize.

The trends suggested in this study demonstrate that when the mobility of the population is higher, the political impact of the incoming Hispanic population is lowered, such as is the case in Orlando, FL. The study also demonstrates that when government officials and community leaders demonstrate political will, despite structural challenges, they can create new and innovative approaches to problem-solving. The case of Little Rock, AR stands out for its unique proactive and collaborative model of community engagement. In stark contrast, when the established political power structure is antagonistic to the influx of new residents, then the Hispanic experience can become conflictual, such as the case of Cicero, IL.

Additionally, what stands out in all three communities that were examined is the important role played by the earlier arrivals and the more established second-generation citizens. They can play an proactive stewardship for the more recently arrived, but it becomes incumbent upon them to find the means to educate the population so as to better

integrate them into the overall community. In every case, when this type of stewardship is undertaken, the success rates for integration and improved community relations is high. Dialogue and political will is critical to the process of integration. While Latinos tend to self-segregate and concentrate in pockets around the country, it is critical that a conscious effort be made not to isolate this population as it prevents a full integration experience and ultimately limits the potential of the community. Also, there is strong evidence that the potential for backlash increases when the level of cultural interaction decreases. Events like Cinco de Mayo celebrations become the gateways for understanding.

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