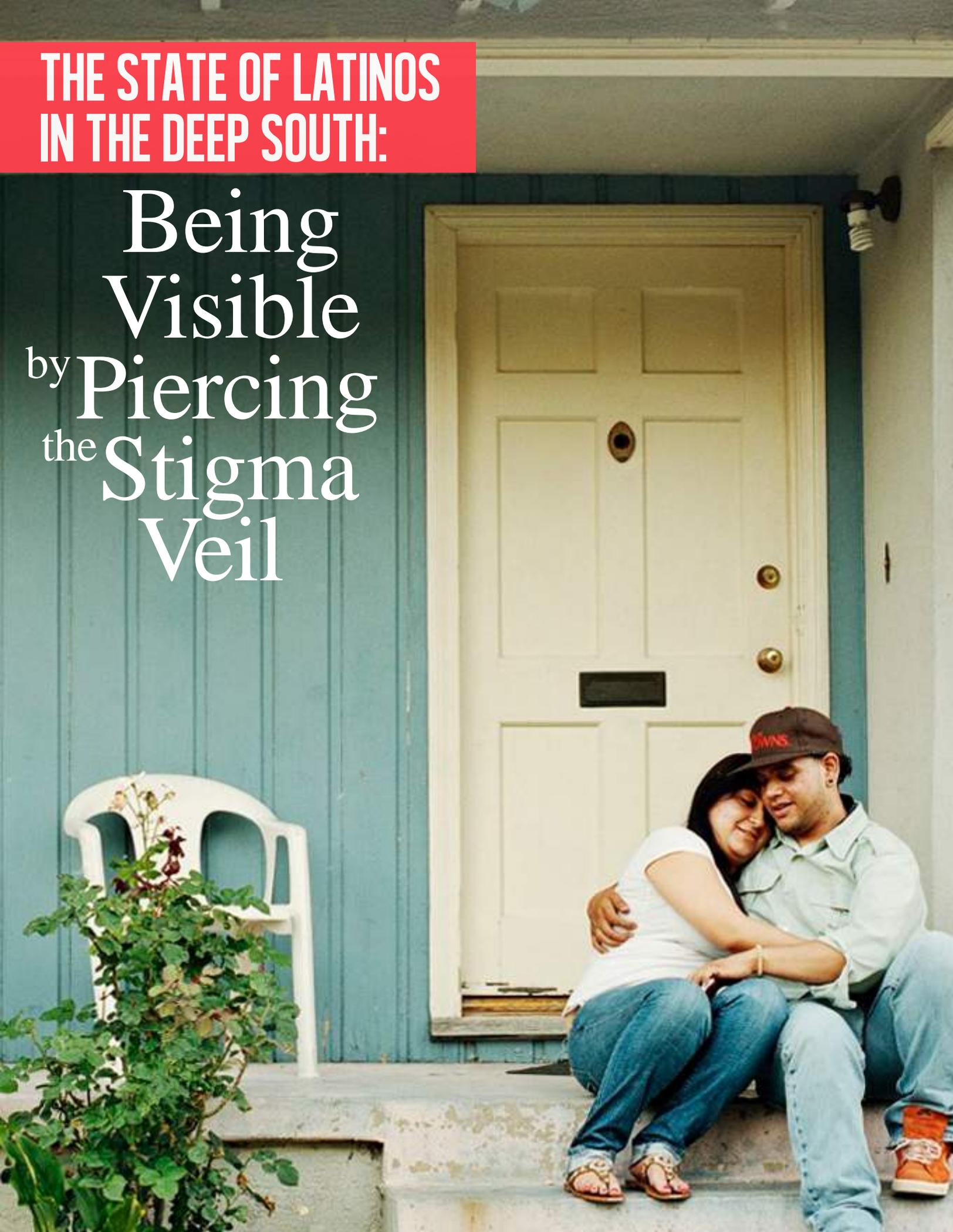


THE STATE OF LATINOS  
IN THE DEEP SOUTH:

Being  
Visible  
by Piercing  
the Stigma  
Veil



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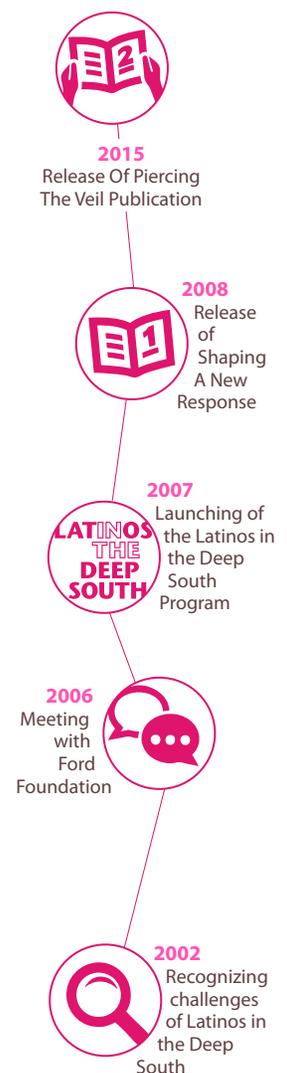
The Latino Commission on AIDS is a nonprofit organization founded in 1990 dedicated to addressing the health disparities and responding to the impact of HIV & AIDS and viral Hepatitis in our communities. The Commission is the leading organization coordinating Latinos in the Deep South; National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day (May 15), National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (October 15), and other prevention, research, capacity building, and advocacy programs in the United States and its territories. The Commission is the founder of the Hispanic Health Network.

# PREFACE

On World AIDS Day 2008, the Latino Commission on AIDS released the seminal report, *Shaping the New Response: HIV/AIDS & Latinos in the Deep South*.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the report, we noted that Latinos were a prominent emerging population in what has traditionally been referred to as the “Deep South” of the United States. In 2002, as part of our national community mobilization work, we recognized that the growing Latino communities in the South frequently had no access to healthcare, were not being adequately reached through traditional health/prevention awareness programs, and faced numerous language barriers as many health service agencies lacked Spanish-speaking or culturally conversant employees. In 2006 we met with the Ford Foundation to discuss the urgent need to support our vision to develop a regional Latino initiative in the southern region of the United States. In the summer of 2007, the Latino Commission on AIDS launched its strategic program initiative: *Latinos in the Deep South*.

As of 2014, Latinos are recognized as the nation’s largest minority and one of its fastest growing. The Hispanic population has increased six fold, from 9.1 million in 1970 to 53 million in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Latino population is projected to reach 129 million by 2060, according to the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau reports.<sup>3</sup> Taking that projection into account, Latinos, who are currently at 17% of the US population, will represent at least 31% of our nation by 2060. At this rate of growth, it may no longer be accurate to label Latinos as an emerging population.

Most Hispanics live in nine states that have, for historical and geographic reasons, been home to long-standing Latino communities—Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York and Texas.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the percentage of Latinos living in other states, most notably the Deep South, has risen quickly and substantially.



The *Deep South* is a descriptive category referring to the cultural, historical and geographic sub-region of the U.S., specifically the southeastern area that generally encompasses seven states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The 2010 U.S. Census indicated that the states with the largest percentage growth in their Hispanic populations include a large area in the southeastern United States including Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and South Carolina.<sup>v</sup> For example, South Carolina saw a staggering 161% increase in the state’s Latino population.<sup>6</sup> **Latinos are clearly a population that is rising in significance, both numerically and culturally, in many parts of the South.** They are settling down to make lives for themselves and their families where opportunities have arisen. Latinos in the Deep South are no longer rightfully considered “emerging,” they have emerged.

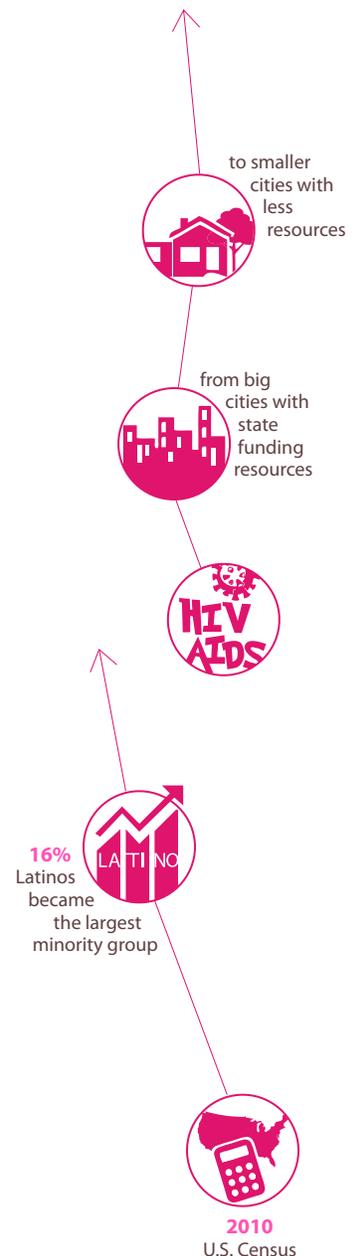
	Hispanic Population (2012)	Percent Change in Hispanic Population (2000-2012)	Percent of Total State Population (2012)
UNITED STATES	52,932,483	+50.4%	16.9%
ALABAMA	185,188	+156.7%	3.8%
GEORGIA	903,300	+108.0%	9.1%
LOUISIANA	207,131	+85.5%	4.5%
MISSISSIPPI	76,139	+104.1%	2.6%
NORTH CAROLINA	845,420	+124.2%	8.7%
SOUTH CAROLINA	247,336	+161.3%	5.2%
TENNESSEE	306,710	+162.8%	4.8%

While the Latino population has been rising steadily in the Deep South, there have been four large-scale national changes in the United States that have had an impact on this growing Latino population. First, from 2008 to 2009, the United States suffered an economic recession. Although the recession officially ended in 2009, its impact is still being felt whereby the distribution of household incomes in the United States became increasingly unequal during

the subsequent economic recovery. States with the worst economic losses from 2008 to 2010 were Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, in Mississippi, about one in four residents suffered large economic losses in 2009 and 2010. Furthermore, the government experienced a shutdown in 2013, as the U.S. Congress failed to pass a budget. All this led to an uneasy feeling towards the economic recovery which places Latinos in a difficult position, as they are at times portrayed as “taking jobs away” from other disadvantaged and marginalized groups at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Second, in 2010, the first ever U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy was released just as the HIV incidence in the South was spiking dangerously, with 15 of the top 20 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) for HIV incidence located in the South.<sup>8</sup> **HIV/AIDS, long thought to be an urban disease, has migrated South to rural communities that have a scarcity of the money, resources or sexual education to effectively combat the epidemic.** Nearly 50% of all new cases of HIV infection in the U.S. are in the South, even though that region makes up only a third of the U.S. population.<sup>9</sup> The South and the Deep South specifically, have seen a rise in health disparities where marginalized populations are made even more susceptible to diseases due to poverty, lack of access to care and a haphazardly constituted healthcare infrastructure. Southerners with HIV are also estimated to be at higher risk of dying, compared to people living with HIV in other regions.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Latinos find their communities growing and population increasing, but in areas that already suffer from a pronounced shortage of adequate healthcare infrastructure. This inadequacy of infrastructure is extremely problematic for a group that already frequently finds access to healthcare difficult.

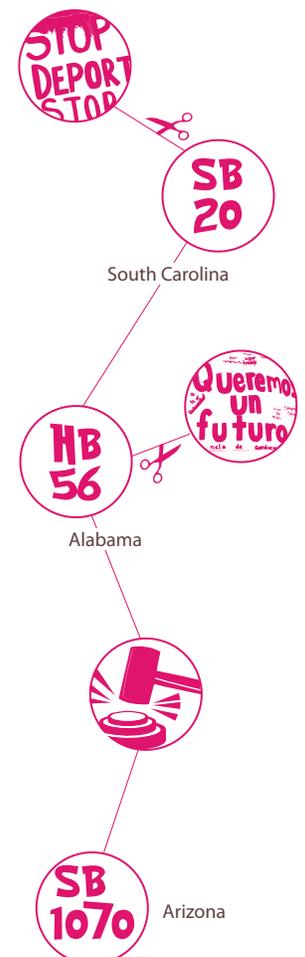
In this vein, the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA), upheld by the Supreme Court in 2012, was meant to expand health care coverage to most, if not all Americans. Despite its stated aim to expand access to affordable health coverage, healthcare access has continued to vary significantly across the country, with the South manifesting extreme variance in ACA implementation. The fact that the Supreme Court ruling allowed states to opt out of Medicaid expansion meant that many individuals were left in a



health insurance coverage gap.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, as of August 2014, there were 20 states that did not expand Medicaid and those included all of the Deep South states.<sup>12</sup> Sadly, Southerners across all ethnic and cultural groups have poorer overall health status than those in other regions of the U.S. Again, Latinos find themselves in another “Catch-22,” that is, they remain one of the largest groups of uninsured and at the same time are increasingly settling in areas where obtaining health insurance coverage is often difficult.

At the same time, two of the Deep South states that saw the greatest increase in Latinos across the nation, Alabama and South Carolina, enacted some of the strictest immigration laws in the country. In 2011, five states (Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah) passed anti-immigrant bills modeled after Arizona’s 2010 law, SB 1070. As a matter of fact, 164 anti-immigration laws were passed by various state legislatures in 2010 and 2011.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the highly debated part of Arizona’s infamous anti-immigrant law, which requires police to determine the immigration status of someone arrested or detained when there is “reasonable suspicion” they are not in the U.S. legally.<sup>14</sup> All this, has led to a phenomenon labeled “driving while brown.”

Thus, since the release of the 2008 report we have seen significant shifts in the national discourse surrounding the South, including shifts in the economy, citizenry, healthcare, Hispanic population, HIV and health disparities. Despite the economic recession in 2014, two of the top ten fastest growing cities were in North Carolina--Raleigh and Charlotte.<sup>15</sup> Atlanta was not far behind in its growth and it has become a banking and professional center not only for the South, but also for the nation.<sup>16</sup> Further, the South today holds the nation’s most diverse population of public schoolchildren.<sup>17</sup> The South is growing and it is within the socio-political climate of the recession, healthcare and immigration reform that Latinos are settling into the South. These challenges impact the overall state of Latino day-to-day life and health in the South. It is these challenges and attempts to overcome these challenges that we explore in the report that follows.



NOTE: The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subsequent to our 2008 report on the state of Latinos in the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee), the Latino Commission on AIDS resolved to further develop its *Latinos in the Deep South* program through convening regional summits, providing capacity building assistance, disseminating the latest “state of the science” information, and endeavoring to catalyze community mobilization efforts based on our integrated LUKA (Leadership, Unity, Knowledge, Action) model for grassroots organization.

The period between our 2008 assessment of Latinos in the Deep South and today has been marked by significant political, social, and economic changes. As the size of the Latino population expanded in the South, the nation as a whole felt four widespread developments: an economic recession and slow recovery, the release of the first ever National HIV/AIDS strategy, the passing of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by Congress, and a wave of state-level anti-immigration legislation was introduced. The Deep South became the region where HIV incidence rates were flaring up and where more people were dying from HIV. As the entire country struggled to cope with the economic fallout of the recession, the impact of ACA, and debate our nation’s immigration policies, the growing population of Latinos in the Deep South has struggled to find their place in Southern society, where deep historical inequities have long existed, and where new agencies emerged or existing agencies recognized a need to direct efforts to the Latino communities that had chosen to settle in an area that despite a history of complex social problems, has also afforded new opportunities.

# Method

In this follow-up assessment, the focus was broad and examined the daily lives of Latinos, including the social, cultural, and political environment in which Latinos were settling and making a life. While the 2008 report focused on HIV/AIDS, this assessment and subsequent report is broader, taking a holistic view of Latinos in the Deep South in order to deeply contextualize the “lived” Latino experience. For it is that context in which individuals live that, in some part, determines health status and health care access, availability and acceptability. Health, including HIV risk, is subject to the environment, globally speaking. If we are to understand health and health risk, we must understand the context in which health actions and risks take place. In other words, we must understand the environment.

From 2012-2014, the Latino Commission on AIDS conducted an environmental scan with regards to five key areas: health, leadership, community organizing, educational attainment, and political power. The mixed method assessment entailed interviews, meetings and discussions with more than 350 stakeholders across the Deep South representing nine key sectors: AIDS service organizations, community based organizations, academia, media, health care organizations, government, law, communities at large, and activists. Furthermore, the assessment included both a media analysis of over 150 news articles from the seven Deep South states, as well as a survey of more than 100 key stakeholders (representing the sectors listed above) as to the current state of the Latino population in the South, compared to five years ago.

# Findings

Historically, minorities in the South have contributed en *masse* to the economy yet have not been fully recognized as doing so. For much of our nation’s history, minorities in the South have been seen, but not heard, exploited, but not reasonably compensated, talked to and about, but not listened to. Since the Civil Rights Movement, the pathway out of this enforced marginalization has been a series of grassroots upswells, essentially demands to become visible. This history is at the forefront of the consciousness of many of the Latinos in the Deep South, and those working with them to achieve greater social equity, both implicitly and overtly. There are 11 essential take-home messages:

- 1. Since the 1990 Census, a full generation of young Latinos has come of age in the South.** The growing population of Latinos in the Deep South isn’t a seasonal or temporary phenomenon. Many seek and find economic and professional opportunities, or join their already-settled families.
- 2. Latinos in the South, though settled, are at times invisible.** Health institutions struggle to connect with the realities faced by Latinos/Hispanics in cities, counties and states in the South. As a result, Latinos face health challenges at many levels.
- 3. Stigma can be a wall.** Many Deep South Latinos are subjected to *Institutional Stigma*. Stigma embedded in an agency’s culture promotes a tenuous relationship between Latinos overall and government systems and institutions. Furthermore, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and those living with HIV/AIDS, face additional stigmas. There are unique needs of LGBT Latinos and Latinos living with HIV/AIDS that must be addressed at a local level.

4. **Latinos in the Deep South are not a monolith.** Latinos are most assuredly a set of diverse groups that reflect different nationalities, ethnicities, generations, varying levels of economic and professional attainment, documentation and citizenship status, as well as acculturation levels. This diversity bleeds into the differing types of neighborhoods Latinos live in, the jobs that Latinos hold, and their relative success within the community.
5. **Latinos in the Deep South are working hard towards the American Dream.** While widely diverse, Latinos are uniformly and ubiquitously referred to as hardworking; they are striving for the American Dream by pulling their weight and contributing to the economy, despite strong political and divisive rhetoric.
6. **Overarching health concerns for Latinos in the Deep South are mental health, diabetes, obesity, heart disease and dental care.** These are partly due to many Latinos not being familiar with how healthcare systems work, in particular prevention; as well as lack of health insurance.
7. **Latino leadership and social capital is heavily “taxed” in the Deep South.** Latino champions, building off of their own internal strengths and community challenges, have arisen throughout the Deep South states; individual community members have stepped up. However, there is a “price” – what we refer to as the *Latino Tax* - whereby, Latinos are called upon to serve in multiple roles, including acting as medical translators, an often-unsustainable solution for the individual and agency.
8. **There is a desire and need for Latino Leadership in all spheres of life.** There is a thirst for enhanced Latino voting power and more visible elected Latino officials. Latinos are tired of being labeled the sleeping tiger and want to finally wake up and exercise their might at the ballot box. Thus, while Latinos are becoming visible as a group, they are not yet visible as a social force, and there is a dire need for them to do so. Community mobilization efforts have brought attention to the plight of Latinos in the South. Like any historical movement, these efforts have seen missteps and fractured communication; however, they have also brought about several important community wins that should be applauded.
9. **Latinos in the Deep South are appreciative of the quality of life they lead in the South, despite the social and institutional challenges.** While living in the South may present challenges, when individuals compare it to their home countries or other regions, the South appears appealing. It is simply a matter of engaging in “downward comparisons” and realizing that despite challenges, many feel they are indeed better off than if they had remained back home. Quality of life has most assuredly been a rollercoaster for the past five years with a marked upswing as of late. This comparative mind set helps Latinos in the Deep South not feel as put upon in their daily lives.

10. **The quality of life for Latinos in the Deep South is experiencing an upswing.** Latino businesses have been springing up in communities; everything from bakeries to restaurants to grocery stores have emerged to serve the needs of Latinos and fill the void that Wal-Mart's shelves do not address. There is also increased media coverage amplifying the beneficial economic effects of Latinos, more cultural festivals occurring in Deep South neighborhoods, increased translation and bilingual services, and the rise of Spanish-language radio.
  
11. **Although, Latinos often share challenges historically experienced by the African American community, there is a bit of a disconnect between African-Americans and Latinos.** The Deep South has a history of social and economic inequality. Civil rights were hard fought in the Deep South many decades back and continue to this day. Latinos now are embedded in this civil rights quest. It is urgent to develop unique, community-driven initiatives to bring these communities together. They are neighbors but they do not know each other; tension and misunderstanding can present a challenge when trying to reach the goal of having healthy communities.

## Going Forward

In our discussions and analyses of media discourse, we have found that that despite these aforementioned challenges, Latinos are settling in. Local communities are growing and starting to interface with the larger culture of the area. There is a sense of resilience and a growing chorus of advocacy on behalf of and by the differing Latino communities. While an economically vulnerable group that has somewhat limited access to healthcare, the Latino Deep South population is finding its footing and making progress.

As we look towards the future, it is of utmost importance that we begin to address the gaps for Latinos in educational and political attainment, in health coverage, and in the labor force. Recognizing that each local Latino community is different and faces unique challenges, it is important that we acknowledge this diversity and work towards policy and community solutions that emerge from thoughtful discussions.

We hope this report, with its recommendations, will advance the discussion of Latino lives in the Deep South with a focused attention on immigration, institutionalized stigma, health disparities and economic progress by giving voice to many different individual concerns, ideas and experiences, and inviting all into a larger discourse on the changing face of the United States.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Although each state in the Deep South represents its own unique environment for Latinos, a series of recommendations emerged from the regional assessment that holds across the seven states. These recommendations originate with the interview participants and from comparison with best practice in the field. Overall, this report examines the state of Latinos in the Deep South with regards to five key areas: health, leadership, community organizing, educational attainment, and political power.

## **Recommendation 1:**

### **Prioritize a Response to Institutionalized and Felt Stigma Associated with the Latino Identity.**

Stigma at the institutional level, such as selective policing of Latino drivers, impacts all aspects of life from physical and mental health to children's education to economic viability. Addressing stigma requires creating responses that focus on multiple levels – with individuals, families, schools, health and social service organizations, law enforcement, and other government agencies. Based on the environmental scan, there is a need to focus on raising awareness of Latinos and Latino culture, identifying and addressing public policies, and specifically strengthening relations with local law enforcement. The following recommendations may be used by government agencies, community organizations, health care organizations, law enforcement, policy makers and community advocates.

#### **To address public policies that facilitate institutionalized stigma:**

- Develop stigma awareness campaigns directed towards policy makers at large that provide clear, educational messaging as to what institutionalized stigma is and its impact on their constituents, from the national to the extremely local level.<sup>18</sup> Research has found that lack of awareness of stigma and its damaging effects cause undue community harm.
- Develop state-by-state, community-driven initiatives to address the stigma associated with HIV & AIDS, including the challenges faced by the local LGBT communities.
- Create public opportunities for policy dialogue on legal and policy reform, particularly on a local level.
- Support or create mechanisms for redressing rights abuses
- Build the capacity of all public programs to improve and meet compliance standards with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for those with Limited English Proficiency.<sup>19</sup>

- Advocate for the Ryan White program (a federal program specifically to support those living with HIV/AIDS) to consider translation services a core service. As it is now, 75% of funds are required to be spent on *core services*, with the remaining 25% to cover transportation, case management and other medical non-core service costs. For the Latino population, translation is clearly a core service that impacts healthcare access, availability and acceptability yet it is not considered to be core.

**To improve the bonds of trust between Latinos and law enforcement officials:**

- Recruit bilingual, multicultural, police officers from within, and known to, the communities they serve.<sup>20</sup>
- Community leaders and law enforcement officials should meet on a regular basis to exchange information and address misgivings for how Latinos perceive police.<sup>21</sup>
- Provide community workshops on understanding the local laws that impact their daily lives.
- Provide spaces where groups can come together to discuss community concerns and build towards a shared purpose.
- Implement community policing to support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that generate fear among Latinos.
- Promote inter-state and regional dialogue amongst law enforcement and community stakeholders to learn of ways to promote community safety in a way that does not entail enforcement or legal sanction.

## **Recommendation 2.**

### **Enhance Health Care Access, Availability and Acceptability for Latinos.**

Improvements are necessary for increased access to healthcare services and wider dissemination of information, achievable by promoting and protecting a healthy community through the use of best practices and community partnerships. Many of the recommendations below have been implemented at the neighborhood level in the South and appear to be having considerable, positive local impact. The following recommendations may be used by health care (including health departments), social service, advocacy and community based organizations in urban and rural areas.

**To increase the Availability of health services to Latinos:**

- Standardize medical interpreter training and certification.<sup>22</sup>
- Advocate for the expansion of Medicaid to include those 300% of the federal poverty level at a state level.
- Advocate for an Immigration Reform bill that includes access to the healthcare expansion provisions in the Affordable Care Act at a federal level.

**To increase Accessibility of health services to Latinos:**

- Implement sliding fee scales at healthcare organizations more systematically.
- Enhance the services of community health centers (who serve as they do on the front line of the healthcare system), so that they may be more all-encompassing and effective.
- Develop more Latino-specific programs and delineate extensive linkage to care systems in order to help Latinos access *specialists* and specialty care, particularly as it relates to heart disease and diabetes.

- Increase the provision of the *trauma-informed approach and trauma-specific interventions*<sup>23</sup> as they are designed to address the consequences of trauma in the individual and to facilitate healing.
- Increase the flexibility and minimize the sets of required documents at medical centers.
- Fund more peer navigators in the local Latino communities.
- Support the local health departments to see themselves as a community based organization in order for the community to feel more welcomed.

**To increase Acceptability of health services to Latinos:**

- Partner with national organizations, such as the National Hispanic Medical Association, to increase the number of Latino service providers; this in turn would help increase the trust and rapport between Latinos and their medical providers.
- Expand beyond the Health Fair Model. Latinos, like all racial and ethnic groups, need sustainable, appropriate services.
- Provide free diabetes equipment and sugar checks at different sites, including apartment complexes.
- Build on the *Promotoras* Model (community health worker model), but also include community organization members. It has been found that door-to-door rapid HIV testing is feasible and acceptable among Latino immigrants in the south.<sup>24</sup>
- Establish opportunities for medical school and nursing students to provide blood pressure measures at local pharmacies, as well as other services. This should be an integral part of training future doctors and nurses in cultural competency and community medicine.
- Offer Continuing Education (CE) credits that center on culturally responsive provision of care.

## **Recommendation 3.**

### **Advance Continued Latino Economic and Community Development.**

Latinos are ready to work hard. Policies that tap into that work ethic will not only help Latinos, but the overall state of the community and in the region. The Deep South economy in general, and the varying Hispanic communities in particular, would benefit from an economic development climate that seeks to act as a catalyst for investment in the Hispanic business community as well as strategies to strengthen social networks to provide for economic sustainability. The following recommendations may be used by local businesses and business associations, advocates, government agencies, and community based organizations.

**To advance Economic Development of local Latino communities:**

- Encourage local banks, credit unions, and community organizations to work together to provide access to financial products such as checking, savings, and retirement accounts.
- Team up community based organizations with local Chambers of Commerce to provide trainings to community members on entrepreneurship and how to start small businesses.
- Encourage municipal governments in the South to weigh their banking practices to patronize banks that demonstrate support for local Latino business enterprises.<sup>25</sup>

### **To advance Community Development of local Latino communities:**

- Improve the physical condition and availability of housing by increasing the supply of decent, safe, and affordable housing options through rehabilitation, new construction, and expanded opportunities for home ownership.
- Improve the location of public housing so that Latinos are not segregated, as segregated housing produces segregated and inequitable schools.<sup>26</sup>
- Create more local social events for Latinos to come together, increasing visibility, strength and a sense of belonging.
- Develop local resource guides that can be left at various community organizations and businesses - there is a hunger among community members for information on places to get one's car fixed, legal help, and groceries.
- Create a group of local business owners to provide technical assistance to Hispanic/Latino owned non-profits as a way to support community health and wellness.
- Ask funders to provide multi-year, general operating support to non-profits, allowing community based organizations to enhance their sustainability plan and apply for new types of programs and funding initiatives.
- Build up Deep South infrastructure overall, as a way to help lift Latinos up as well. Public transportation systems need to be enhanced in the South and health insurance systems need to be made available for all.

## **Recommendation 4.**

### **Build a New Pool of Local, Regional and National Latino Leaders.**

There needs to be active work at developing a unified political response amongst the diverse Latino communities throughout the South, as well as developing homegrown political organizations that can raise their voices for the common good. The following recommendations may be used by government agencies, media, community based organizations, and community leaders themselves.

### **To increase Latino Leaders' Skills and Leverage in the local community:**

- Fund leadership development programs in the local areas.
- Create a pool/database of Latino leaders and their areas of expertise, for distribution to local organizations, media, and council members to help diversify participation in varying public events and local boards and councils.
- Develop mentoring programs to transfer skills and networks to the younger generations.
- Build *relational communication skills and strategies*, such as the ability to listen and to learn from others, the ability and willingness to share information, the preparedness and ability to speak out and share one's story, and the ability to build relationships with key political stakeholders
- Equip the heavily "taxed" Latinos - those who take on multiple community roles often due to underfunded programs - with the resources to develop their own leadership skills.
- Adequately fund and budget for Latino initiatives, including training and translation, in order to increase sustainability of these programs.

**To increase Opportunities for Community Members to hear about and become involved in local issues:**

- Ensure Spanish language translation support at all public meetings, including speakers as well as listeners in the audience.
- Conduct outreach to the Hispanic community to reach varying populations, including radio, newspapers, flyers, word of mouth/social media, and television.

## **Recommendation 5.**

### **Intensify Community Mobilization Efforts by and on Behalf of Latinos.**

No single organization or individual can adequately and effectively provide the policy infrastructure for an entire state; let alone region. Sustained advocacy is needed to push for increased resources to scale up stigma-reduction efforts directed at families, communities, institutions and governments.

Coalition building and mobilization across racial and ethnic groups will help propel Latinos forward. The South has a great history of African-American leadership and mobilization. Latinos could use mentorship from those that have come before to facilitate progress. Further, Latinos could benefit from finding a common voice amongst themselves to bring to the regional and local policy tables. The following recommendations may be used by: individuals, leaders and community organizations; funders; legal service organizations; media; businesses; and government agencies.

**To enhance Coalition Building:**

- Engage in multicultural community organizing whereby local facilitators recognize and build from the varying community strengths. Cross-cultural alliances will be key for emerging Latino leaders.<sup>27</sup>
- Create cross-sectoral allies and initiatives, as there is a need for legislative advocacy, legal advocacy, and media advocacy. Funders should be mindful of this need as well.
- Provide, when possible, space at national conferences for special sessions whereby African American and Latino leaders can share lessons learned and create mentorship initiatives.
- Invest financially in network building infrastructure so as to help catalyze connections among existing groups and with national partners in order to raise voices further, enhance synergy and eventually have a larger impact.

**To Influence Elections and Policy, Latinos must further translate population growth into increased political participation:**

- Vote in local and national elections when eligible. It is imperative that Latinos themselves work against institutionalized stigma through the ballot box.
- Increase the number of eligible voters. Voter registration drives are crucial to helping Latinos raise their voices at the ballot box.
- Develop an *Accountability Index* whereby communities hold accountable their local advocates, politicians and government systems.
- Promote the ideal that any future state policies and laws advance equal opportunities to all immigrants who desire to settle in the South.

### **To build Local Initiatives:**

- Provide technical assistance services to Hispanic businesses that provide for local advocacy and community development.
- Use Community Development Block Grant funds, where available, to create space within those census tract high poverty neighborhoods to house Hispanic non-profits encouraging Hispanic self-empowerment. Such programs could include: Spanish literacy programs, as well as ESL, leadership, and nutritional classes.

The recommendations listed above apply to a wide variety of sectors ranging from political entities (such as local city councils) to healthcare organizations to businesses. This approach is thus laid out as the lives of Latinos can only be improved through a wide-sectorial approach. Healthcare access depends on enhancing community strengths and political power, as well as improving the healthcare organizations themselves. No single sector or individual can do this alone. We must take a village approach.

## **Scaling up the Implementation of Recommendations**

- The Latino Commission on AIDS is committed to mobilizing support for “best practice” field programming.
- The Latino Commission on AIDS is committed to and encourages others to take on the same commitment to address the deep-seated, often institutionalized, drivers of stigma and discrimination.
- The Latino Commission on AIDS encourages funders from corporations, foundations and government entities to fund programs targeting Latinos for at least 3-5 years so that programs can develop as needed per the local context and take time to take root.
- All recommendations should be implemented in such a way that they involve Latino community members in all phases of implementation.
- The Latino Commission on AIDS recognizes that not one strategy will be adequate to address the multitude of issues impacting Latinos in the Deep South and thus encourages the employment of multiple strategies simultaneously.

## **Vision Statements Going Forward**

- Latinos are to be counted and be seen
- Latinos are to have a life free of stigma and unfettered access to health care and other services
- In advocacy efforts, Latinos should not accept “unsatisfactory” answers

Stigma operates within families; communities; institutions such as health care facilities and places of employment; the media; and government policies, laws and legislation and we should all work together to uproot this!

# INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the South constitutes a culturally distinctive region. Noted for generally conservative social and political stances, the South has poorer health, inadequate education and transportation infrastructure, lower rates of health spending, and insufficient tax revenues.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the Deep South has a disproportionate share of low-income residents who are unemployed, and consequently many Southerners lack access to health insurance and health care.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Southern residents have poorer health statuses in aggregate, than those in other regions of the U.S.<sup>30</sup> Heart disease and obesity are two key diseases that are higher in the Southern part of the U.S.<sup>31</sup> As previously noted, southerners with HIV are also estimated to be at higher risk of dying, compared to people living with HIV in other geographic locations. It is in this landscape that Latinos are settling in greater numbers than the past and attempting to access services in the South.

It must be said, contrary to common public perception and inflammatory media characterizations, that the increase in the Latino population is the result of three converging factors- or what we may refer to using popular culture framing - a perfect storm. First, there has been an increase in migrant populations, characterized by the pursuit of seasonal agricultural employment, the presence of meat farms, increasing construction industry demands, and a growing number of service jobs.<sup>32</sup> Second, there has been an increase in “*in-migration*” as Latinos from other parts of the U.S. relocate to the Southern states to follow family or employment in other industries.<sup>33</sup> Third, Latinos have had a period of increased birthrates, although that has slightly decreased over the last few years.<sup>34</sup> Since 2000, the U.S.-born Latino population has continued to grow at a faster rate than that of the immigrant Latino population.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the foreign-born share of Latinos is now declining in the U.S.

The reaction to this increase of Latinos in the South has been vast and varied. There has been a rise in service providers welcoming this new population, as well as less inclusive reactions and actions. For example, in South Carolina, among other things, a law was passed making it a crime to harbor or transport unauthorized immigrants, and for legal immigrants not to carry their papers. This South Carolina SB-20 law also required state and local police to check the immigration status of people they suspected were there illegally. Such a widely cast net, according to media reports as well as our interviews, created an environment of unease, fear, and suspicion. Further, in this vein, a 2012 survey by the Center for Immigration Studies found that 16 states require use of E-Verify – an Internet-based system that allows businesses to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States-- in some form. The Center for Immigration Studies survey found that six states have laws requiring all or nearly all businesses to use E-Verify to determine employment eligibility: Arizona,

Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina.<sup>36</sup> That is, nearly all of the Deep South states.

As a result of the increased Latino population in the South, the vast health disparities that lay within that landscape, and the varying reactions to the rise of Latinos in the South, the Latino Commission on AIDS established its *Latinos in the Deep South* program in 2007, releasing in 2008 a needs assessment report meant to catalyze action. Thereafter, the program developed the LUKA (Leadership, Unity, Knowledge, Action) principle of community mobilization. The program has conducted nine summits, 30 roundtables, 40 localized trainings, over 100 webinars open to all Deep South States, and 3 cohorts of the Dennis DeLeon Sustainable Leadership Institute that enhances the leadership skills and opportunities of emerging leaders throughout the South. Further, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the program created a customized, state-specific Dennis DeLeon Leadership Institute for emerging Latino leaders in Georgia.

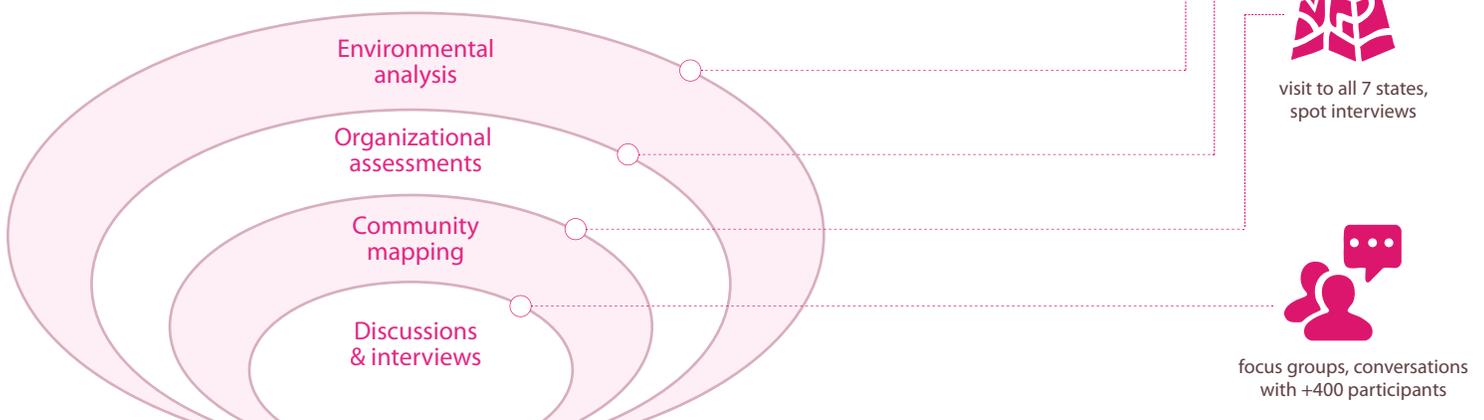
While building community and organizational capacity in the Deep South, the Commission also sought to continue to understand and document the needs of Latinos there in order to support communities as they continue moving forward. As a follow up to the 2008 report, a new report is presented here that takes a holistic, interconnected perspective on the needs of Latinos in the South. Specifically, the report seeks to answer the following questions:

- Who are the Latinos in the Deep South?
- What is the meaning of Latinos, as an EMERGED population, in the Deep South?
- What are the lived experiences of Latinos in the Deep South?
- What have been the challenges Latinos have faced?
- What benefits have been seen and experienced?
- What types of activities, initiatives and actions may be necessary to enhance the lives of Latinos in the Deep South?

## Methodology

To prepare this report, the authors utilized three different types of data sets to triangulate and respond to the main questions of interest regarding the lived lives of Latinos in the Deep South.

### Environmental Scan: Mixed Method



- Media Analysis: There is ample evidence demonstrating that newspapers reflect pre-existing events and attitudes, mold new attitudes and beliefs, serve to educate the public, and can play an important role in shaping and spearheading policy spotlight and agenda.<sup>37</sup> As such, we undertook an analysis of 150 news articles and clips distributed throughout the seven Deep South states where we coded for stigma, political tone and community and policy issues presented as related to Latinos and to health issues, namely HIV.
- Current Public Data Sets: Review of national and state data sets on immigration, population, health, and policy patterns in the United States and in the seven states of the Deep South, such as the American Community Survey and the U.S. Census.
- Iterative Ethnographic Assessment: A series of focus groups, in-depth interviews, community mapping and spot interviews, as well as a written on-line survey, was conducted with community members, leaders and stakeholders across a wide spectrum of sectors in all seven Deep South states. Overall there were over 400 individuals that were part of this assessment process. The interviewed individuals were from nine key sectors: AIDS service organizations, community based organizations, academia, media, health care organizations, government, law, communities at large, and activists. Over 80% had been in their respective state for over two years and they primarily identified as African American/Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian. Two-thirds identified as female.

The Commission selected media articles regarding: 1) Latinos/Hispanics or 2) HIV/AIDS in each of the Deep South states. Next, articles were coded in order to understand stigmatization, policy discussions, the framing of Latinos and of HIV and the overall valence of these subjects in the Deep South. One-third of the articles were community-focused and 26% were written due to the release of a data set, such as the U.S. Census or HIV incidence rates.

The length of the interviews ranged from one to three hours, taking place in person or by telephone. Interviews were transcribed, read and annotated. The annotations were then translated into codes and later classified into groups of meanings. Rather than beginning the ethnographic process with a preconception of what was occurring, the analytic person-situation centered approach focused on understanding a wide array of experiences and building understanding grounded in real-world patterns. The authoring team jointly analyzed these coding groups and developed clusters of themes that represented Latinos' experiences in the Deep South.

Throughout the report, the findings from the various methodologies are combined to provide an informed, multifaceted and multidimensional perspective of the lived lives of Latinos in the Deep South.

# FINDINGS

IT HAS BECOME ABUNDANTLY APPARENT THAT LATINOS ARE NO LONGER EMERGING COMMUNITIES, rather they are now settled in the Deep South. Back in 1986, in both North Carolina and Georgia, Hispanic children numbered one out of every 200 students in each state's public schools.<sup>38</sup> Two decades later, one out of every ten students in the public schools in these Southern states was Hispanic.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, these statistics tell us that Latinos are no longer emerging, rather that they have settled. In interview after interview, people noted that Latinos had settled in for the long haul, intent upon taking advantage of newfound opportunities and optimistic about the long-term prospects of residence in the Deep South.

As one Latina from North Carolina noted: *“the initial decision to settle, once they get their feet wet and find a secure job, those [individuals] are moving forward. I am seeing the greatest improvement in academic achievement of students whose families settle in.”*

Across the stories from out in the communities, as well as the narratives pushed by media, there were three main themes describing the lives of Latinos in the Deep South.

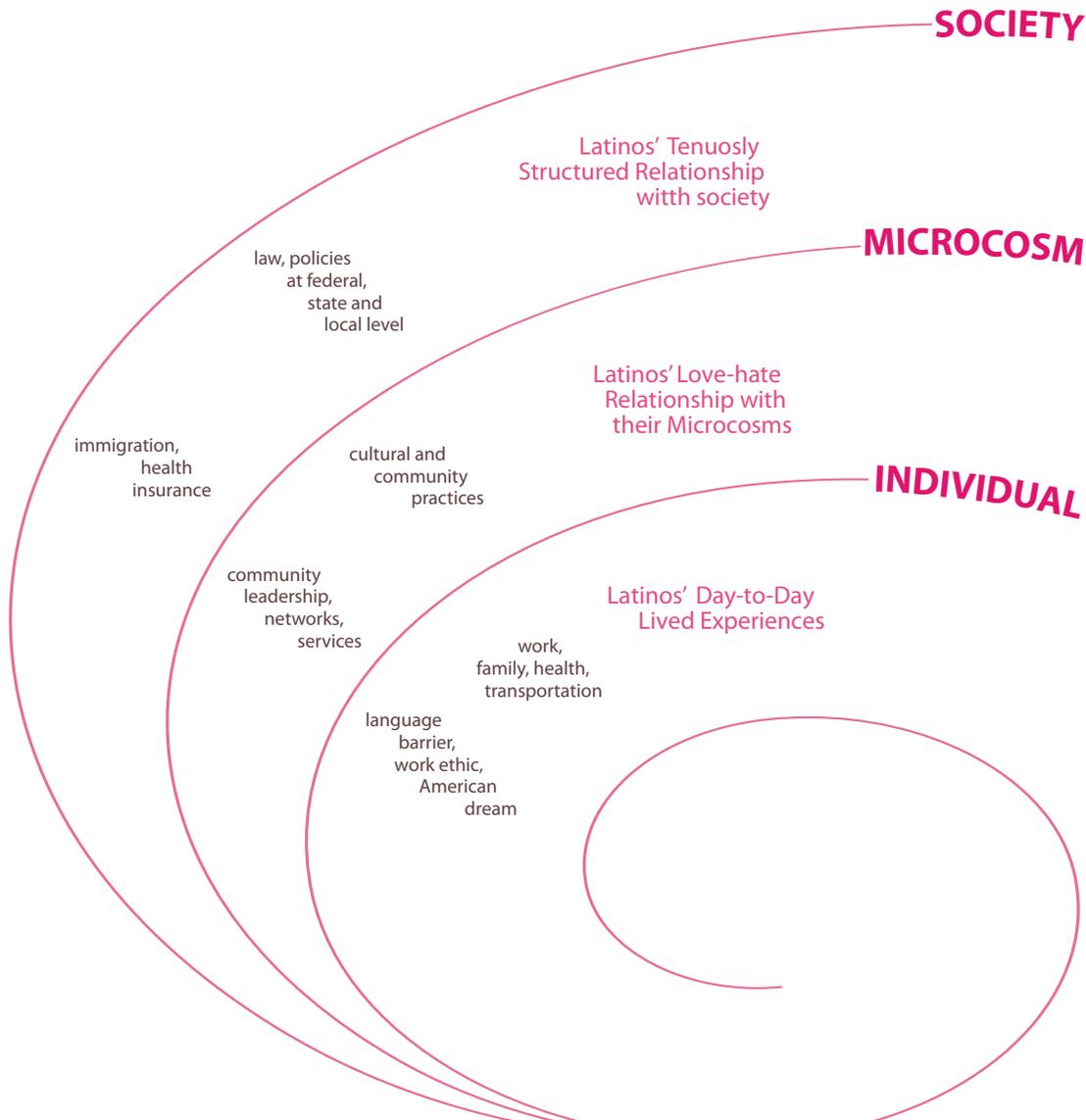
The primary theme is that of Latinos' tenuously structured relationship with society. Laws, policies and regulations at the federal, state and local levels have a direct impact on the lives of Latinos and their interactions with society at large.

The second theme is that of Latinos' experience in the Deep South, in which their respective neighborhoods are microcosms of the Deep South itself, both in unity and division. These local cultural and community practices and sentiments envelop Latinos within microcosms.

The third theme is that of *Latinos' day-to-day lived experiences*. Much can be understood about communities in terms of social, political, and cultural trends, but there is not always a one-to-one correspondence with the everyday life of an individual, and it is important to validate not only the larger picture, but how that picture is interpreted when one person goes to work, attends church, shops the grocery store, or rides the bus.

Each theme discussed next is grounded in the meanings as explained by the individuals themselves within their own local context.

### Ecological Model



## {THEME 1}

### **Latinos In The Deep South Have A Tenuous Relationship With The Social Structure**

As Latinos emerge, settle and navigate the Deep South landscape, they find themselves having to negotiate their structured relationship with the region, state and local institutions. Relative to society at large, Latinos not only having to understand their relationship with these institutions, but also how they can be active participants in structuring, molding and directing that relationship. Furthermore, non-Latinos are learning to navigate this new environment in which Latino needs are becoming increasingly significant, Latino voices are being raised, and Latinos are finding themselves embedded in the infrastructure.

In the lived experience of navigating through this new landscape, there are three influential sub-themes of note centered around the fact that Latinos' lives are being determined by policies that are created in such a way that Latinos are constantly trying to get an equal footing.

#### [SUBTHEME A]

### **The Political, Economic and Structural Backdrop**

*“Politicians are not responsive, they have and they are in a different place than the people in the community”*—A female from Mississippi

For many individuals we encountered in the South, the political, economic and structural backdrop in the Deep South, as detailed below, has meant that Latinos, and in particular Latino immigrants, are often left on the sidelines. The political winds have pushed many Latinos to the margins, relegating them to an ever more tenuous relationship with institutions. Where Latino identities were fairly stigmatized, policies further exacerbated the stigmatization of Latinos. While this system of codified stigma is pervasive throughout the South, there were also noted instances of progress at the institutional level. For example, many individuals noted there were mixed success with hiring bilingual staff and/or getting a translation service system in place. A Latino service provider noted in terms of the changes, *“We are mostly good in providing interpreters via phone; [we] have interpreters in the clinic to provide more interpretation now, and what we do is we educate our clients. So we know if they have an appointment, they call in advance and ask for an interpreter. This is going in the right direction.”*

Anti-Immigrant Legislation passed in several Deep South states in recent years. The animosity, negative sentiment, and obstructionism resulting from a divided House of Representatives at the federal level has trickled down to each of the states, and in particular to states in the Deep South, long a bastion of the most conservative elements of right-wing politics. That trickling down has led to an air of divisive rhetoric and antagonistic actions that have served to scapegoat Latinos and has led to a highly stigmatized Latino identity. This stigmatized identity means that many Latinos feel ostracized, rejected and marked by society for solely being Latino. The state of North Carolina even proposed placing a pink strip sticker on the driver's licenses of undocumented individuals with bold lettering stating **“NO LAWFUL STATUS.”**<sup>40</sup>

## Major Anti-Immigrant Legislation in the Deep South

State	Year	Bill	Outcome
LOUISIANA	2010	HB 1205	Died in committee; aspects passed in other legislation such as E-verify
GEORGIA	2011	HB 87	Passed, many sections blocked by legal action; continued advocacy against among local coalitions
ALABAMA	2011	HB 56	Passed, blocked by legal action from local coalitions; settlement of more than \$500,000
SOUTH CAROLINA	2011	SB 20	Passed, aspects blocked by legal action in late 2011; many permanently blocked in 2014
MISSISSIPPI	2012	HB 488	Died in committee; advocacy groups remain vigilant
NORTH CAROLINA	2013	HB 786	Vetoed by Governor and recommended for study

*The Rise of the Tea Party* - In the past decade, a new political ethos has gained a significant foothold in the Deep South. The Tea Party’s platform generally demands a reduction of government spending and taxes, and thus has come out strongly against the use of government services for undocumented immigrants. Furthermore, Tea Party groups have voiced support for tighter border security and have opposed efforts to provide a path for citizenship to those that have crossed the border unauthorized. At the state level, Tea Party members have successfully advocated to block the expansion of Medicaid, as enabled by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), in all Deep South states. The implications are likely to mean the Deep South will fall even further behind in key health disparity indexes.

*The Decrease of Funded Latino-Serving Organizations* - While the Hispanic population has grown exponentially and continues to do so, structural systems (including research funding streams) have not been adjusted to address the needs of Latinos in the Deep South. Many of those we spoke with noted that as funding has ended for Latino-specific programs, fewer new initiatives have been dedicated to serving Latino communities. A researcher in North Carolina noted that, *“When we have quality programs or intervention going on, people [meaning Latinos] come out of the wood work. We have high enrollment & retention rates because no one is helping. People have needs and when there is a resource, people will jump on it. Lots of needs—very little programmatic or research designed to understand those needs and address those needs.”* The result has been that many Latino-serving agencies have had to scale down or close all together. A Latina outreach worker noted, *“Primero que la población ha aumentado. Pero la respuesta del sistema a la población no es tan efectiva.” (Primarily the population has increased. However, the response of the system to the population has not been very effective.)*

### *High Unemployment Rates and the New Electronic Employment Verification System (E-Verify)*

The unemployment rate for Latinos averaged 11.5 percent in 2011, compared to 7.9 percent for Whites.<sup>41</sup> The Latino unemployment numbers are tied in part to the fact that Latinos are overrepresented in industries such as construction and manufacturing, both of which lost the most jobs during the recession, and that they are underrepresented in sectors that experienced job growth during the recession—education and health services. To further exacerbate the situation, there are at times unjust compensation conditions for Latinos, such as wages being withheld with no recourse. A young Latina profiled in a review of the effects of anti-immigrant laws, for instance, noted that when she went to get her payment for cleaning services, the employer greeted her with a gun and refused to pay her. She was left without

access to her wages.<sup>42</sup> To further compound employment challenges, in the past five years all Deep South states utilize some level of E-Verify as a condition of employment, with all five states mandating use for all or almost all employers.<sup>43</sup> E-Verify is an internet-based system that allows businesses to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States.<sup>44</sup> The overall picture is that unemployment rates for Latinos vary depending on where they live, their education level, and whether they have the proper documentation for employment or otherwise.

*Institutionalized Stigma* - State policies (including funding directives) and politics also contribute to an air of prejudice and rejection at an institutional level – government, healthcare and educational systems. These systems and their underlying institutions end up putting policies in place that further propel negative attitudes, beliefs and rejection of a group of individuals.

*Driver's Licenses* - A hotly debated issue in the South is the question of whether to provide driver's licenses and government issued identification cards to those without a social security number. Without a driver's license, getting to one's place of employment or to a doctor's appointment may be nearly impossible. For many that we interviewed, having a driver's license and having access to transportation are basic necessities for daily life in the South's rural landscape. Tied to this issue is that many utilities in the South (such as water) are only available to those that present a "valid" U.S. or state photo identification. As such, we encountered several narratives of Latinos not being able to access basic utilities for their residences.

*Barriers to Public School Enrollment* - In the Southern states, Hispanic students increased from six percent in 1978 to more than 20 percent in 2008.<sup>45</sup> Enrollment has continued to rise through 2014. Media accounts and stories from the field noted that many accounts of school officials in the Deep South have issued guidance in a manner that raised barriers for undocumented children and children from immigrant families who were seeking to receive public education. Alabama, in 2012, went so far as to pass a law requiring schools to check immigration status.<sup>46</sup> The law was struck down but serves as a clear example of institutionalized stigma. A Latino activist from Alabama noted that, "***despite the efforts from the Department of Education, counties and cities in Alabama are still segregating Latinos, still clustering them in schools who are majority minorities.***"

*Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)* – A Presidential Executive Order authorized on June 15, 2012 notes that "***...certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal.***" They are also eligible for work authorization. Deferred action is a use of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status.<sup>47</sup> Three of the Deep South states do not allow DACA eligible students to enroll in any public college; while the rest of the states allow DACA eligible students to enroll, students are required to pay out-of-state tuition. For many Latinos, this is an undue burden and is counterproductive, as higher education is increasingly essential to economic viability and general healthier lives in the long term.

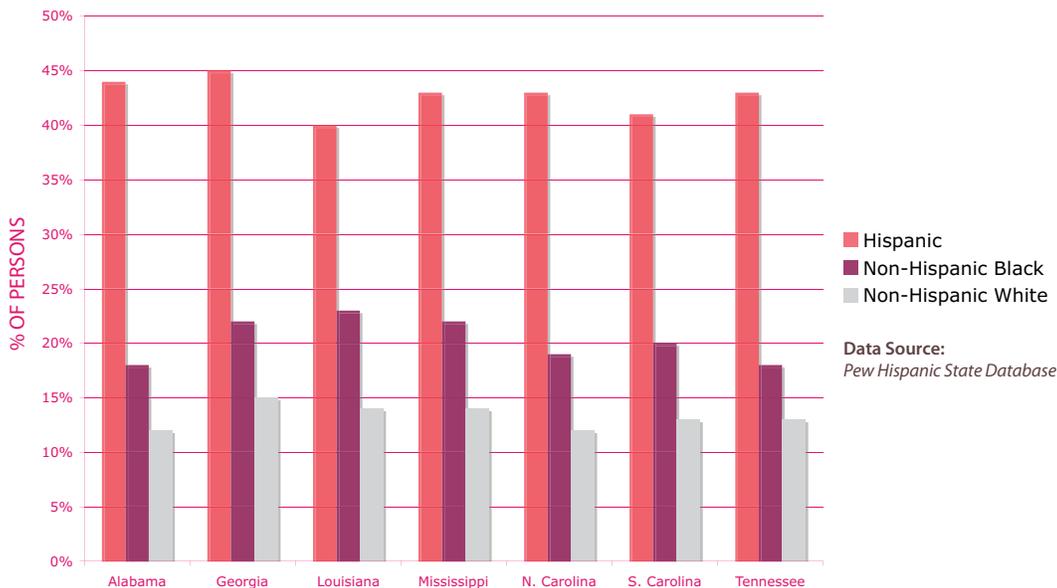
## [SUBTHEME B]

### Relationship with the Healthcare System

Latinos face major obstacles when it comes to utilizing the healthcare system. In the last decade, political debate has focused on the “broken” state of the U.S. healthcare system. While strides have been made towards a more equitable system with the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the implementation of healthcare reform has been regionally fractured and continues to include discriminatory policies specifically targeted at Latinos. This results in a system where Latinos not only have difficulty accessing healthcare, but also find it difficult to even obtain information about available healthcare options, thus finding it difficult to accept, or be accepted by the current healthcare system.

Availability of Healthcare - While the ACA expanded healthcare coverage for millions, many Latinos are still left uninsured. One year after ACA enrollment began, data suggests that 25% of those who remain uninsured are Latino.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, more than 1.5 million Latino adults live in states that are not expanding Medicaid and have family incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. The latest data demonstrates that nearly half (49%) of Latino immigrants who are not U.S. citizens lack health insurance.<sup>49</sup> Many interviewees noted that even when Latinos are eligible for health insurance, they believe they are ineligible and do not try to obtain insurance. A Latino medical doctor noted, *“With a growing Hispanic population, in the recent years, we don’t have programs in place to provide them services.”*

### Uninsured Individuals in Deep South States, 2011



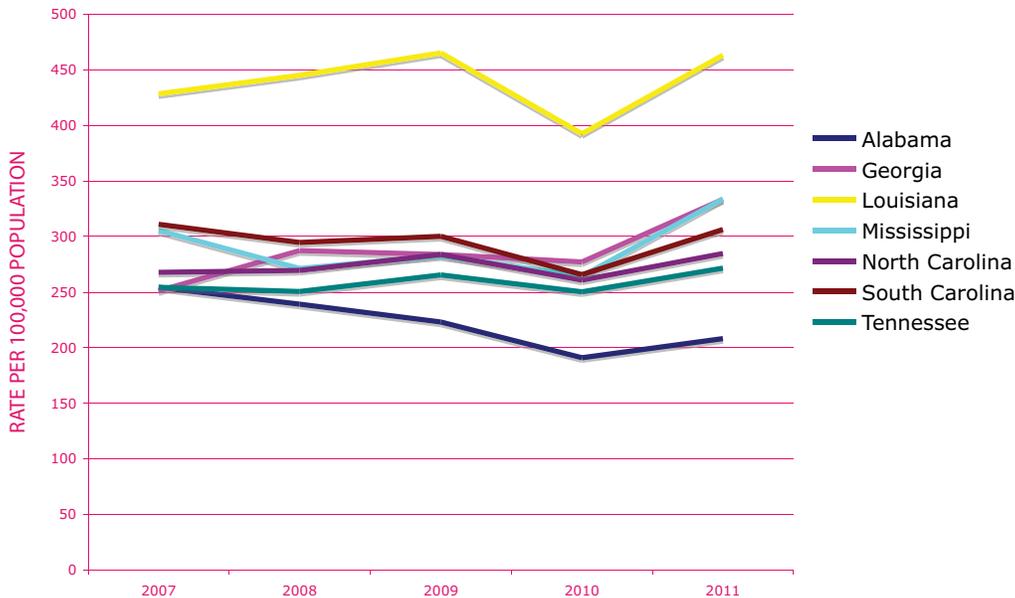
Accessibility to Healthcare - Transportation has been a major issue in terms of Latinos accessing care due to the exceedingly high average distance to healthcare centers. There is also the common perception, amongst Latinos, as well as a realistic hit to the wallet, that medical services and insurance plans through the ACA are too costly. Furthermore, many Latinos lament the fact that even when they can access healthcare, they often still cannot access specialty care. As one healthcare provider noted, *“Specialists we don’t employ—we get on the phone and say, ‘Can you find it in your heart to see this person,’ most say yes and some say no.”* [this is in regards to seeing Latinos]. Furthermore, many noted that Latinos experience longer waiting room times due to the fact that they often have to wait for translation services.

Acceptability of Healthcare - For many, receiving health care services means navigating a complex series of interactions that often cause many Latinos to feel unwelcomed, or at best, quite confused. As one Latina noted, ***“Everything is new--they are not aware of the process, don’t know how to navigate that system.”*** Repeatedly, our interviewees and media analyses pointed to a set of local cultural *scripts* (those social interaction rules we tend to follow subconsciously or at times consciously) that frequently only confused Latinos who were new to the area. A primary example is that of preventative healthcare services. Going to the doctor as a preventative measure was often noted as something very strange to those newly arrived from a foreign country. Furthermore, many of those newly arrived are used to interacting more with medical doctors and for longer periods of time than is typical in the U.S. They are not used to seeing a nurse practitioner instead of a medical doctor. Layer these “odd” new set of interactions and scripts with lack of translation services and often the Latino patient-provider relationship is uncomfortable, perhaps impacting health literacy and adherence. In our conversations out in the field, it was noted that there was often a lack of cultural competency in terms of service provision at many healthcare facilities. Everything from signage in the waiting rooms, to cumbersome English-only forms that have to be completed at the front-desk receptionist area before one can even be admitted to see a doctor play a key role in determining if it is a welcoming, accepting environment.

Mental Healthcare is Healthcare Too - Issues surrounding mental health are a priority for Latinos and those that care for them, yet in the South, and in the U.S. generally, mental health is low on the radar. Many Latinos undergo harrowing journeys to settle in the Deep South and at times are living in the shadows, adding to their pressing need for mental health care. Yet, there is no uniform system for addressing mental health, and current estimates are that 25% of uninsured adults have a mental health condition or substance use disorder, or both<sup>50</sup>. This adversely impacts Latinos who are a large percentage of the uninsured.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, there are less practicing psychologists in the Deep South states where there is ostensibly a high need.<sup>52</sup> As a Latina in South Carolina noted, ***“Mental health is a big health disparity. It’s something very personal... I have to go in and interpret and I’m not trained in mental health, and many times there are those underlying mental health issue; there is really no providers in South Carolina that are Spanish-speaking, and we do the interpretation thing, but it doesn’t work real well.”***

The State of HIV, as it Pertains to Latinos – As the Latino Commission on AIDS, we would be remiss if we did not address the state of HIV itself in the South for Latinos. In reviewing health indicator data on a state-by-state basis, we have found that Louisiana, across all Deep South states, has the highest rate of Latinos living with HIV. This is not surprising considering that both Baton Rouge and New Orleans are in the highest ten HIV incidence rate cities in the U.S. The rate of Hispanics living with HIV has been fairly steady since we released our 2008 report, with a slight uptick the last few years. While these rates should still give us pause, for many Latinos in the Deep South, HIV was not the top health concern. However, one troubling trend is that Latinos tend to be “late testers,” meaning that within a year of diagnosis of HIV, they are also diagnosed with AIDS. Such a finding is probably due to the political and institutional barriers noted above, as well as the fact that healthcare is inaccessible, unavailable and unacceptable to many.

## Hispanics Living with an HIV Diagnosis, 2007-2011



Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV Surveillance 2008-2012

### [SUBTHEME C]

## State of Latino Activism in the Deep South

Many cities in the Deep South have a proud history of civil rights leadership, along with an equally grim history of civil rights violations. Unfortunately, there is now a new group in the South being targeted for discrimination - Latinos.

*Activism is Not a Top Need* - Despite the South's history of civil rights activism, individuals we spoke with unequivocally and repeatedly noted there is a distinct and marked need for Latino activism in the South. However, with many other needs taking precedence, activism amongst Latinos has lagged. As a Latino activist expressed to us, ***“Hard one, even for me. The best way, it’s going to require groups like mine, that work with immigrants, to take the lead in [the] conversation ... about community improvement and involving all parties and groups of immigrants.”*** Others lamented the fact that many Latinos are not readily engaged in activism efforts, as many do not want to call attention to themselves for fear of further discrimination or just the desire to blend.

*Lack of Unity in Activism* - A Latina activist expressed that it is often tiring trying to rally a group - ***“Sometimes it’s a waste of time and effort - we should do things together.”*** Furthermore, another noted that they have gotten great responses for their rallies, but just not from Latinos themselves. ***“Mostly we have white people attending the rally who supported the Hispanic community--Latinos avoided but local white community also stood against the rally--they were protesting the rally. I think we have a really good solid group of non-Hispanic local people who support Hispanic people in the area.”*** There have been small wins; and while this is invigorating, it also leaves Latinos wanting more. ***“In-state tuition was granted for TPS [Temporary Protected Status] holders but not DACA holders. Ultimately, I think it’s good that people are active and people are acknowledging the issues that are affecting the community and are acting on them. But it’s still... there is a sense of frustration in the air, ultimately, because they don’t get immigration reform. So it’s all of these like, we were tossed like a bone right?”***

## {THEME 2}

# “A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, DESPITE THE RACISM”

Latinos in the Deep South live in regional and local neighborhood microcosms. What rapidly became apparent in our discussions with stakeholders was that these unique microcosms of politics and culture are experienced through the numerous, tiny interactions that make up a day of lived experience. The force of this experience is felt through interactions at the supermarket or issues discussed at a school PTA meeting. The paperwork at the doctor’s office or the attitude of the local sheriff are more determinative of one’s state of mind than U.S. border policy or the intentions of the Affordable Care Act. Thus, we often hear strangely conflicted statements, such as that of a Latina, who after living in the Deep South for several years, noted that her town was *“a great place to live, despite the racism.”* There are broad trends, and there are lived lives. As Latinos learn to navigate institutions and understand social structures in their new homes in the Deep South, they are also enveloped in local communities that have their own rhythms and cultural norms, on a much smaller scale. These local communities can at times be perceived as an oasis or as a desert.

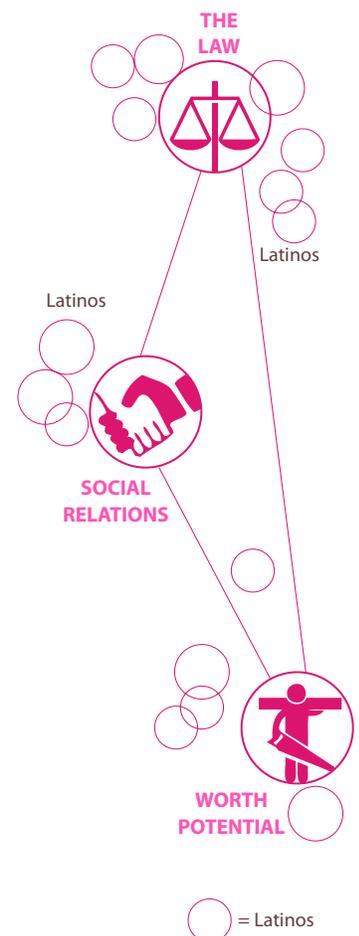
### [SUBTHEME A]

## Living in Microclimates with Varying Conditions

Each local community and state, though thoroughly embedded in the Deep South, has its own microclimate – a local atmospheric zone per se - in which Latinos find themselves attempting to address their own needs within a unique social environment. Media articles and interviewees from throughout the South reflected a certain set of microclimates in which conditions vary for Latinos.

*Differing Value Systems by Region* - As we have seen from numerous analyses of the cultural values throughout the United States, each region, whether it is the Northeast, the West Coast, the Midwest or the Deep South, has certain values and philosophies that govern daily lives, court systems and even popular culture. Within the Deep South itself, there are, despite pervasive conservatism, regional differences in how much certain values are endorsed. As such, microcosms are created. For instance, we found three types of value systems.

- *Hierarchies* - Our analysis of mainstream media in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, showed an emphasis on the concept of social hierarchy. Meaning, that Latinos were more often thought of based on their relative position to other groups on a social “totem pole”. Consider this sentiment: *“You know, it’s about second-class citizenship—it took a long time for African Americans to overcome it, the fight was so long and at the end they settled in their place and it’s not quite right. So Whites and Blacks can drink and party together, but we’re not quite there yet. It took us a couple of 100 years to sit beside somebody, so I see [it will] take Latinos some time to be accepted too.”*
- *Pulling your own weight* - In comparison, media reports from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina more often framed Latino stories based on the perceived willingness of Latinos to “pull their own weight” in the local economy. As another example, take what a long-time North Carolina resident stated: *“There has been a Latino middle class in North Carolina since the mid-90’s; they have a strong purchasing power, and not many groups have the purchasing power that Latinos do. 14-16 billion a year, which ain’t bad.”*



- *Punitive legislative policies* - Interviewees from Alabama, South Carolina and Georgia often described the lives of Latinos as being “in the shadows,” in that these are the states that had more punitive legislative measures enacted this past decade. While those from North Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi often described the lives of Latinos as a bit more free of worry, as these were the states that did not enact as punitive legislative policies.

*How the Meaning of Immigrants is Deciphered* - Within our conversations emerged a conscious, or unconscious, attempt to understand the significance of immigrants in their communities. An underlying, yet pervasive question emerged throughout our conversations-whether Latinos contribute to the economy or are consuming resources that could be better allocated. Each community appears to answer this question differently, as portrayed in the local media, as well as the relative level of resources available to Latinos and the community at large. A Latina in Mississippi noted, ***“The economy is struggling - there’s a feeling that anyone that looks different took your job - there is economic turmoil. Statewide. Locally, however, we’re luckier, it’s a university town not quite as much of that sentiment.”*** Meanwhile, a Latino in South Carolina noted, ***“I feel like folks in the government have taken a more positive stance on the meaning of immigrants in South Carolina. Instead of the leaching, more focus on not deportations but rather tax paying folks.”*** As Latinos participate in the local economy (working jobs, buying locally, and paying one’s taxes) they are integrating into the local social systems and there is growing recognition of these contributions. This often begins at a very local level, generating a context of “shared interests” among neighbors. A feature media story on the various immigrant groups in Tennessee noted how they have typically been met with a great deal of acceptance.<sup>53</sup> Mr. Ghanem, an immigrant highlighted in the story, stated: ***“They used to think we were from another universe, but people have changed how they deal with immigrants.”***

*The Emotional Environment* – Those we interviewed most often described their microclimates with deeply emotional language, frequently highlighting when fear, teasing, discomfort, or outright ostracism were important parts of the lived life. One might even relate particular microclimates to the lived life of Latinos as an “emotional environment” that can at times be described as fearful or comforting. Narratives regarding fear were often surrounding the plight of the undocumented and concerns surrounding deportation. Accounts varied by municipality and were either mitigated or amplified by the perceived relationship Latinos had with local law enforcement. Police relations can range from situations such as in Alamance County where the sheriff’s department played video games involving shooting “illegal immigrants,”<sup>54</sup> to situations where the local police openly stated they would not enforce certain laws that are prejudicial to Latinos. For example, in South Carolina, a Latino male activist noted that in regards to the state’s anti-immigrant law SB 20,<sup>55</sup> ***“The police are not enforcing it and our sheriff knew that there wasn’t the resources, so they are not going to go out and deport people with no papers.”***

We also heard narratives where Latinos were a source of pride in the community. In South Carolina we were told the following story ***“We did summer camp registration, and it’s a mix of races, the parents were saying that they are lucky to live in John’s Island, people in North Charleston and Goose Creek, they don’t have a big ESL program, and they don’t have bilingual staff, even in the Hispanic community they say ‘don’t move.’ There are different clinics and there is a lot on John’s Island. That’s a benefit for us.”*** In New Orleans, a Latino expressed how his community values him: ***“The Latinos came and moved the garbage in HAZMAT suits, and gutted their homes, they rebuilt them. I’m met with responses of gratitude and it’s been almost 10 years since Katrina.”***

*Your Zip Code Determines your Health* - We have heard much these days of how “zip codes” determine one’s health, or as one Latina noted, a ***“Zip code overrides your genetic code.”*** However, the neighborhoods in which Latinos live are often marked, not by zip code, but

by housing or trailer park complexes. Those in turn become their own communities and subcultures, rife with housing needs ranging from adequate plumbing to allocating enough sleeping space. As a stakeholder noted: *“The anti-immigrant laws in Georgia put Latinos on the edge. Latinos are forced to live in crowded apartments because they can’t rent freely.”*

## [SUBTHEME B]

### Where are All the Latinos?

In the Deep South, neighborhoods are small communities unto themselves often characterized by their unique set of cultural norms and sources of gossip that get passed on from neighbor to neighbor, like a game of telephone. During the course of our discussions the word that came up most often in regard to the Latino “state of being” was, *“invisible.”* A Latina from North Carolina describes this phenomenon from the perspective as to why many non-Latinos ask “Where did they come from?” Going on to say, *“I think that the conversation about Latinos is not so much about race, I think it is more of the ‘original alien’-- a non-American, foreign being. Identifying immigrants as ‘aliens’ doesn’t so much translate into Black or White as it translates into an un-American piece.”* Sentiments described above often lead to self-isolation, living on margins, and not being visible in public spaces. In a photojournalism feature on Latinos in Tennessee, journalist Megan King stated: *“Probably what surprises most people who look at this work, which is how much of a presence the Hispanic community has in Northeast Tennessee, and how it still goes unnoticed.”* Another key stakeholder also noted that, *“large portions of the Hispanic community are invisible to other residents.”*

Wal-Mart is the Local Latino Epicenter – Despite the presumed invisibility of many Latinos, many we spoke to cited Wal-Mart as the one place where Latinos are visible. The low price, one-stop retailer has become a big part of the Latino life. Latino-specific aisles cater to the cultural needs of local communities. Local businesses have taken note and are now more apt to compete for the Latino consumer by stocking their shelves with Latino-oriented products, such as Goya brands. Additionally, Latino oriented convenience stores, often referred to in the South as *“tiendas,”* are more conspicuous in communities throughout the South than they had been a decade earlier. A long-term resident from Tennessee noted that in the Hickory Hill area, a middle-class, predominantly African-American community in the Southeast Memphis, there are now *“lots of businesses geared toward Latinos---they are more visible.”*

Spanish Language is in the Air – In our travels and interviews throughout the South, we were told and we heard for ourselves that the Spanish language is filling the Southern air, to the delight of many Latinos. Furthermore, cultural festivals, including the celebration of *Cinco de Mayo*, are becoming more common in communities throughout the South. Such activities are not attended by just Latinos, but also include many non-Latinos embracing Latino cultures into their own lives. A Latina excitedly recounted that her community now boasts *“two radio AM stations and they play Tejano music, some merengue and cumbias.”* However, the more common audible presence of Spanish in the air is not always met with such joy. Other accounts described the act of hearing Spanish in public spaces as culture shock for many non-Latino residents, presumably representing a major cultural shift that takes them outside of their traditional comfort zone. A Latina we talked with helped us understand her experience of how those speaking the Spanish language in public spaces are denigrated. *“One day I was eating with my mom who was speaking Spanish, a lady looked at me and said something like ‘we speak English here,’ and I turned around and said I can speak whatever I want. Situations like that are very common. Sometimes they hang up and that’s it. I really don’t care. A month ago, the server said someone refused to sit at next table [because she was speaking Spanish.]”*



[SUBTHEME C]

## The Historical Backdrop of Race Relations in the Deep South

In a region where race relations traditionally have been defined in terms of Black and White, an influx of Latino immigrants to the Deep South in the last decade has upset the historical and cultural balance, creating tensions among longtime residents (including other minority groups) and new ethnic groups. An African-American Southerner we spoke with described his experience as, *“Everything is so Black and White. I can’t say that I saw much about Latinos... You don’t really hear much from the average person about Latinos.”*

Nevertheless, as Latinos continue to take root in the Deep South, community relations with African Americans are developing. These relationships and burgeoning contacts, both in terms of shared experiences and intercultural stressors, are part of the day-to-day fabric of Latino lives. Attempts have been made to bridge the apparent cultural divides between the two groups and as such are key to the perceived quality of life for Latinos. As one African-American female from Louisiana noted: *“Many communities are really trying to get people to look at the system and understand why you see this income inequality. Now you have a few undocumented workers - that is not the cause of income inequality.”*

## {THEME 3}

### “I AM A LATINO IN THE DEEP SOUTH”

Although many in the general community may perceive Latinos to be a homogenous or monolithic group, they most assuredly are not, and in particular they are not just one group in the Deep South. There are many misperceptions, mostly based on fear, ignorance, or political rhetoric, that Latinos in the South are all Mexican, undocumented and migrant workers. This could not be further from the truth. The actual figure of undocumented Hispanics in the U.S. is around 18%, and only 37% of U.S. Hispanics are actually immigrants, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, of the estimated 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S., 52% are from Mexico and approximately 10% live in Deep South states.<sup>57</sup> In 2012, Pew Hispanic Center reported a tipping point in immigration from Mexico and attributes a “*net 0 immigration*” to legal enforcement and the great recession in the U.S.<sup>58</sup> Yet, mischaracterizations impact the everyday lived lives of Latinos in the South. Puerto Rican professionals in the South, for instance, are still often first approached as foreigners who do not speak English, despite their automatic U.S. citizenship. The stigma undocumented Hispanics face marks Latino identity as whole in the South - and it’s very divisive. Furthermore, there are other Latino community divisions that have been highlighted such as integration, heavily taxed lives and coping tactics, reflecting heterogeneity in the population that is often lumped under the umbrella of being a “Latino.”

#### [SUBTHEME A]

### Reclaiming Relationships and Quality of Life

Latinos we interviewed that have lived in the South over the past decade explained that they first arrived to a welcoming environment. However, this changed with both the national and regional focus on immigration and the tremulous economy. Obviously, increasing populations helped in making a previously invisible minority more visible. The divisive tone surrounding immigration in the past few years is a result of increased visibility.

As the social and economic climate has improved in the past few years, the state of Latinos in the Deep South has similarly improved, suggesting the significance that national political agendas and wider economic stressors have on the quality of life of new immigrant populations. For example, among the 12 largest metro areas, the Atlanta region now has the nation’s third fastest job growth, behind only Houston and Dallas, and this has similarly benefited the economic and social welfare of local Latinos.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, only 77% of those key stakeholders we surveyed noted that quality of life for Latinos was better than it had been in the recent past. A survey participant expressed, *“I think community wise things are improving--businesses, support organizations have grown a lot and there are more Latinos in the past couple years than 10 years ago so it’s a more comforting presence. Policy wise things have been pretty static, not too many pro-immigrant changes here.”* Another stakeholder explains, *“Latinos are making some small gains in quality of life, and with the younger ones acquiring education skills I believe it is inevitable [that] progress will be more visible with time.”*

#### [SUBTHEME B]

### Unmasking Internal Differences in Latino Communities

Diversified Workforce - Many non-Latinos may have the perception that Latinos in the Deep South are primarily migrant farmworkers. Yet, our Deep South survey stakeholders, interviewees and datasets from Pew Hispanic Center report that Latinos participate in diverse

work environments, especially in the construction, restaurant and landscaping industries.<sup>60</sup> Due in part to documentation status, generational differences, and reason for coming to the state (economic pull versus career interests), there are also differences by professional status in local Latino communities.

*Language* - Among immigrant Latinos across the Deep South, a distinct language gap exists between children and adults. This very much mirrors what others have found across the country in that some 70% of immigrant children between ages 5 and 17 years say they speak only English or speak English very well.<sup>61</sup> By comparison, just 32% of immigrant adults say they speak only English or speak English very well. This generational divide not only impacts the communications between Latino parents and their children, but it also impacts the level of supervision young Latinos get from their parents and how Latinos interact with the educational system, often resulting in difficult system navigations for Latino families, with children frequently taking on an interpreter's role.

*Family Divisions* - In 2011, a total of 16.6 million people, many of Hispanic origin, live in mixed-status families with at least one undocumented family member.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the consequences of lack of legal status, including lower wages and barriers to higher education and medical care, adversely impact not only undocumented Latinos themselves, but also their families and communities. As a Latina Deep South activist explained, ***“Many families are separated because one parent has been deported. I mean, that’s the cause of the depression. It makes you crazy knowing that if you step out you will never know if you are going to come home or see your family again.”*** In a similar vein, a Latino service provider in North Carolina commented, ***“We have a lot of mixed families, many families with children who are born in the U.S. and they, its sad, but they are afraid of being deported. Now looks better, not as bad as before, but still have some people detained just going to work, going to the park, get in trouble even when have kids who are American citizens and that is very taxing for the kids.”***

## [SUBTHEME C]

### Visible Integration is the New Assimilation

Latinos in the Deep South are creating, through lived experiences in their various communities, a new way of assimilating. Integration is conceived of as a two-way process, through which both the majority and the minorities influence and change one another, and in which differences can be peacefully accommodated as long as there is a common commitment to living together. Interestingly, in our survey of key stakeholders over 95% noted that ***“Latinos will retain a strong Latino culture”*** over the next two years and 60% noted that the local Latino community will ***“blend their cultures with other communities”*** in the next two years. These two sentiments together showcase how integration is the new assimilation. Furthermore, a survey stakeholder noted that a key sign of an improved quality of life for Latinos is the ***“blending of Hispanic and non-Hispanic cultures in schools.”***

While integration is occurring, there is a deeply-rooted sense of retaining culture through small and large actions alike, ranging from placing a folkloric symbol at the store doorway to speaking Spanish in public spaces. Yet, at the same time there is also a sense of blending in and not rocking the boat. Interestingly, there is also the perception that non-Latinos are not only embracing Latinos and their culture in certain locales but that they are also integrating Latino culture into their own lives.

## [SUBTHEME D]

### Latino Leadership and Social Capital is Heavily “Taxed” in the Deep South

While Latinos are called upon to have multiple roles and represent the community-at-large, there is still a noted leadership vacuum. While representing the community can be empowering at times, it can also be extremely taxing thus leaving the individual without resources to further develop their own leadership skills. Because of the growing numbers of Latinos in the South, in the context of inadequate infrastructure to accommodate this growing population, there is an inherent social “tax” for those Latinos taking initiative and assuming leadership in the Deep South.

Multiple Role Tax - Many of the Latinos in the South who are employed in non-agricultural or construction industries often find themselves being called upon to serve in multiple roles. For instance, they may be a case manager who is also a *de facto* translator and interpreter, as the only Spanish-speaking individual in the office or department. One Latina expressed, ***“I am the only Hispanic who is also a social worker, also deal with all types of clients constantly—through medical care, psychological care, called on all the time to translate.”*** Another noted, ***“I translate all of that - whatever you think of. Sometimes it’s a bit overwhelming.”***

Representation Tax - As well as having multiple roles, Latinos in the South often find themselves being held up as representatives of the ostensible Latino community-at-large and sometimes being criticized for possibly representing that Latino voice. A Latina noted: ***“Just because you speak Spanish does not mean that you can relate to the entire Latino community. It took me over 25 years to learn the other Latino culture.”*** In a slightly different, yet similar vein, one can look at elected official Evelyn “Mimi” Woodson, a former candy store owner who turned grass-roots activist. She made history in Georgia by becoming the first Hispanic woman in Georgia to get elected to the City Council. However, she noted there were vast challenges she faced, in particular in regards to representation. For instance, at first: ***“When I would bring up a Latino issue, I would get criticized for focusing on Latino issues. I told them I represent all the people, doesn’t matter if you’re Black or White.”***<sup>63</sup> A stakeholder whose husband is Latino noted: ***“He works at a used car parts place, tons of customers are Latino—part of the reason he was hired was so that he could help to serve huge population of customers, however, other co-workers who don’t speak Spanish, very skeptical of his interactions with Latino clients, one of those seeds underlying institutional racism.”***

Cash on Hand Tax: Sadly, because of banking infrastructure and policies, many Latinos find themselves without a checking account and often walk around with cash. So frequent is this pattern that they have been referred to as “walking ATMs” subjecting them to possible muggings and other crimes.

24/7 Community Liaison Tax: There were some Latinos we spoke with that, because they speak English and can navigate government systems, they are called upon at any time of the day to help assist in community issues, whether it is that a young kid went missing, someone was mugged or someone was giving birth in a parking lot.

The Guinea Pig Tax: Because of the Census, Katrina and various other media-spotlight events, Latinos in the South are often highly sought after as research and report “subjects.” One Deep South stakeholder explained: ***“CDC came down to do work here after hearing about our group and researchers came down and approached us.”*** As a result, Latinos and their allies ***“were being called together to do research all the time and people got annoyed.”*** A Latina in Louisiana expressed: ***“people feel over surveyed, especially since Katrina and the Oil Spill. Seems like every five years... If research could give something back, it would be ok.”***

## [SUBTHEME E]

### Holding Ourselves Accountable

The Protestant Work Ethic is a fundamental component of the American psyche, calling for individuals to engage in hard work, frugality and diligence, promising that they will be rewarded for such values. In common terms, it is often referred to as “pulling one’s weight.” A plurality of the Deep South media articles we examined indeed focused on the moral ethic of “pulling one’s weight,” demonstrating how very deeply this value runs in the collective American consciousness. In that vein, Latinos repeatedly are noted as hard workers, who despite some media reports, political discourse and online public commentary, come to the U.S. to contribute to the economy. Individuals we met with repeatedly noted that Latinos are not taking anyone’s job away and tend to instead focus their everyday lives on working hard and paying for the care of family members. Despite this hard work ethic, many Latinos noted that there are still other instances wherein Latinos need to hold themselves accountable.

Political Leverage - Latinos need not only to work hard, but it is time for Latinos to become embedded in the political system. According to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, in the past 15 years there has been a 53% increase in the total number of Latinos serving in elected office—from 3,743 in 1996 to 5,850 in 2011.<sup>64</sup> However, 96% of Latino elected officials serve in states or regions that are traditional centers of Hispanic populations. Latinos hold only 3.3% of elected seats nationally, in spite of the fact that they make up 17% of the overall population. In the South, that record is even more abysmal. As one stakeholder noted: *“When it comes to civic engagement, too many Hispanic/Latinos are sitting on the sidelines, rather than involved in the process of governing and managing our towns and cities.”*

Vote Early, Vote Often - There is a need for Latinos to vote. For instance, in North Carolina, the number of Hispanics has more than doubled since 2000, and Hispanics now make up 9% of the state’s population.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, Hispanics are only 3.1% of North Carolina’s eligible voters.<sup>66</sup> Why is this? Overall, only 25% of Hispanics in North Carolina are at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen.<sup>67</sup> This situation of ineligibility is the lowest across the U.S. Only 23% of Georgia’s Hispanic population is eligible to vote, compared with 42% nationwide,<sup>68</sup> probably reflecting the state’s high numbers of young Hispanics and new immigrants. Nonetheless, such a contrast points to the notion that the thirst that Latinos have for voting power is a long-way from being quenched. There are some bright spots. According to Pew Hispanic Center, some of the fastest growing states in terms of eligible Hispanic voters are in the Deep South, with the fastest growth being in South Carolina (126.2%), Tennessee (113.7%) and Alabama (110.5%).<sup>69</sup> A Latina researcher in South Carolina proudly expressed, *“It’s interesting to see that we are slowly growing and the population born here or naturalized citizen has grown a lot -- are getting more and more voice in the community ... 28% of the Latino population can vote, 66,000 people can vote so this is significant number of the population.”* A community member commented, *“Trying to get more Latinos to vote. What’s important is the Latino youth born here who can vote. That’s the power of the Latino community - the ones who were born here. And they’ll care about immigration if someone in their family is affected by it.”* Further, while many touted the growth in the current and future number of eligible voters, they also noted that ultimately it is about being counted at the ballot box.

Personal Health - While Latinos certainly suffer from mental health and obesity issues just like others in the U.S. and in the South, there are certain disease states that are seen as impacting the daily lives of Hispanics even more so - those being dental, heart disease, and diabetes. Certainly, according to recent research, Hispanics are at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes and related cardio metabolic abnormalities.<sup>70</sup> Understandably, to some extent, as an AIDS service provider explained, *“When I talk about HIV they’ll say what*

*about diabetes?”* However, many noted that occupational health is a huge issue that gets overlooked. *“It is huge because people do have very harsh working conditions, even in restaurants. Yard services all those things—day labor, all really tough; you’re exposed to all kinds of risks, it’s just crazy.”* Obviously, with access to healthcare being tenuous it is difficult for many Latinos to maintain their health. However, many Latinos in the Deep South did note that Latinos too have to hold themselves accountable for their own health status when the opportunities present themselves. For example, many noted the need to change the health script that Latinos have in regards to prevention. As one Latina service provider explained, *“When they come here it has to do with assimilation and eating a lot of the junk and fast food, or even food from their countries. A lot of them are overweight and their children are overweight. With STDs, they have needs and they are having sex and not protecting themselves.”* Another noted: *“A lot of clients might not see a problem large enough to go through the process to get medical attention, if they are not hurting they don’t bother with it (i.e. - abnormal Pap smear).”* Lastly, in terms of holding ourselves accountable, there is a need for Latinos to mobilize around health issues in our respective states as *“people are turning a blind eye and threatening our future and our state.”*

## [SUBTHEME F]

### Resilience and Coping Strategies

Resilience and coping strategies help ameliorate the daily life stressors. Overall, many of those we’ve interviewed expressed a sense of hope, spirituality, and unity to confront local stressors such as institutionalized stigma, prejudice and lack of resources.

*Using Strengths and Becoming Champions* - In an area labeled the world’s largest nursery community, where there are huge pockets of Latinos engaged in agriculture, a community ally noted that there are *“not a lot of resources for them except themselves.”* As such, community members do pull together and tap into their inner strength and resources. In describing what it is like to live in the South, a community member expressed, *“it feels like the folks we’ve encountered here are a lot more self-reliant. There aren’t any resources around them so they have to go out and make it happen. It’s that sort of thing, a lot of communities realizing that they will have to make their own change and working together to do that.”* Throughout our Deep South travels, we encountered that very essence of what it is like to tap into an inner core of strength.

In a small town in western Louisiana, near a military base, there are many Latinos who are either in the military or serve as contractors for construction projects and similar industries. In the middle of the highway with a bright green awning is a Latino market where Latinos from all over the county come to buy those hard-to-get, culturally important food products that are not generally part of standard stock for local big chain supermarkets. When asked about their store, the owners noted with great pride they were there serving the community where Wal-Mart left off, literally. They established, for example, a money-wire service that complimented Wal-Mart’s service hours. This small store was serving as an extending arm for the community and we saw the gratitude that community members felt towards this little green-awning place of hope and optimism.

Heartwarmingly, we also came across a set of service and medical provider “champions” who tend to go the extra mile for their Latino clients, providing Latinos with their phone numbers and documents they could use should police stop them. These champions have gone far beyond what was or could have been expected in contributing to the quality of life in the Deep South communities.

Mental Tenacity - Many Latinos talked of how they were proud of their culture but would not let personal pride get in the way of making a life for themselves - even if it meant taking on job opportunities that were not what they originally hoped or trained for.

- *“I suffered when I arrived. I didn’t speak English. I took my car without license, and alone. I saw a big hospital went in and asked to talk to the volunteer department. Told him I spoke Spanish, I can help you with Spanish and you can help with English. I worked for 2 months volunteering then they decided to hire me. When I started to work I had an MHA and BA, and I needed to take jobs that were more clerical. They saw my resume and thought I don’t want the job, but I did. I wanted to work.”*
- *“But definitely it is a majority [of the] community that really, really works. They never say no. If I need to clean the floor I will. I don’t care.”*
- *“Latinos that live here learn how to adapt and make the most of their situations, jobs and living areas.”*
- *“New immigrants who are illegal are still beginning but will get there... I think they do fine because they have no choice but to succeed or go back.”*

Strategic Alliances - Stakeholders throughout the Deep South noted that partnerships were imperative and that several key allies for Latinos included: churches, community based organizations, hospitals and media. As a Latina in Louisiana expressed, *“Non profits help the community with immigration, training, and documentation, and how to get insurance, how to get a house through the banks...”* In Alabama we learned, *“Back in 2010-11, the local media was wonderful, there were rallies and they did a good job reporting it [the anti-immigrant law] and you saw rallies, demonstrations ... there was attention to outside media, NY Times, Canadian news and guess what made me proud was that despite our backwardness, you didn’t see the state burn the way it did 45 years ago. It was a big open debate and it was pretty healthy. There was quite a response.”* There was debate amongst Latinos as to whether law enforcement could be an ally. Some felt that the police’s hands had to be forced, while others noted that there were ways to come to a shared goal and purpose for the greater good. Our survey stakeholders noted that local police forces do not have many Latinos in them and that could be a good starting point to developing community policing.

Furthermore, it was noted that there needed to be more Latinos in media and in the education system in order to further enhance the opportunity to have those industries as key allies. Issues range from Latino children being moved from their classes to schools that do not have English as a second language classes to a young Latino man being shot and killed in the back of a police car. These local events and actions spurred local unity and frequently gave rise to community storytellers and activists, who can be local community advocates across an even wider range of issues.

# LATINOS AS TOLD BY THOSE IN THE DEEP SOUTH MAKING PROGRESS

While we have certainly noted many challenges for Latinos in the Deep South, there are also noted successes and indicators of progress that have been highlighted throughout this report. While we have certainly noted many challenges for Latinos in the Deep South, there are also noted successes and indicators of progress that have been highlighted throughout this report. Here we highlight further these markers of progress so as to be inspired and motivated for what the future may bring for Latinos in the Deep South.

## ON ACTIVISM

**“THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE OF NON-LATINOS FIGHTING FOR HISPANIC/LATINO CIVIL AND IMMIGRATION RIGHTS.”**

## BUSINESSES

**“THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO LOST THEIR JOBS IN THE CARPET INDUSTRIES, BUT LATINOS WOULD OPEN A BUSINESS ON THEIR OWN.”**

## SPANISH MEIDA, THE RISE OF RADIO STATIONS

**“The other good thing about Latino media, paper, radio, we have almost the entire state covered now with Latino newspapers and radio stations.”**

.....

**“The radio is huge here. The AM stations have been around for decades. We now have two FM stations in Spanish. They get a lot of information and denounce people - sometimes. On a radio station in a calling and say ‘so and so did me wrong.’”**

**“There is an increase of medical services to the community, which in turn, brings more Latinos in contact with social, medical and civic advocates.”**

**POLITICAL LEADERS BEING APPOINTED OR ELECTED:**

Many that we spoke with in Tennessee, as well as the media articles we pulled, mentioned **Fabian Bedne** – a Latino city council member who was elected recently.

▶ “I never set out to be the first Latino councilman. I’m very much happy to try to be a role model for the kids to show people that it can be done. ... It really isn’t about a particular ethnicity or race. ... Each person has a story, so the beauty of having a council that is big like ours is that we can really serve in a big way the needs of people.”

**THE RISE OF THE NEXT GENERATION**

**“THERE ARE MORE ADOLESCENTS ENROLLING IN HIGH SCHOOL OR PURSUING COLLEGE.”**

**“SOME IMMIGRANTS HAVE A HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE DUE TO THEIR CHILDREN GETTING OLDER AND BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILY.”**

**HIRING OF BILINGUALS AND INCREASE IN BILINGUAL SERVICES**

“In 1998 entire state of Alabama only had 16 ESL certified teachers, for 2500 students I think don’t remember exactly. So first we created the ESL certification program with UAB [University of Alabama-Birmingham]. It’s great, they have 20 teachers graduating each semester now, and they go to teach in other states as well.”

**“THERE ARE MORE BILINGUAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICS, SCHOOLS PROVIDE ESL CLASSES AS WELL AS INTERPRETERS FOR PARENTS AND THE CITY BUILT A COMMUNITY CENTER IN THE AREA WHERE HISPANICS LIVE.”**

# IMAGES

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LATINO IN THE DEEP SOUTH



Site of ICE Raids in Georgia



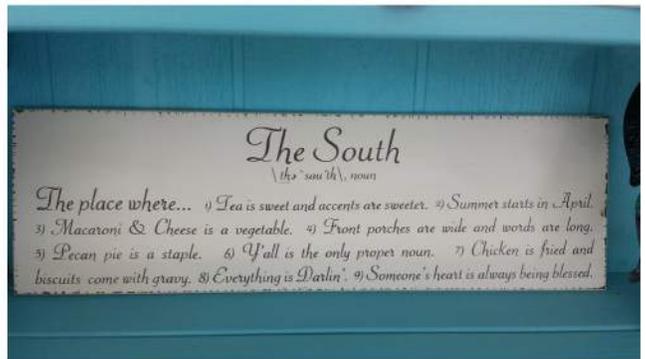
Latinos socializing in Houma, Louisiana



Street art celebrating cultural diversity



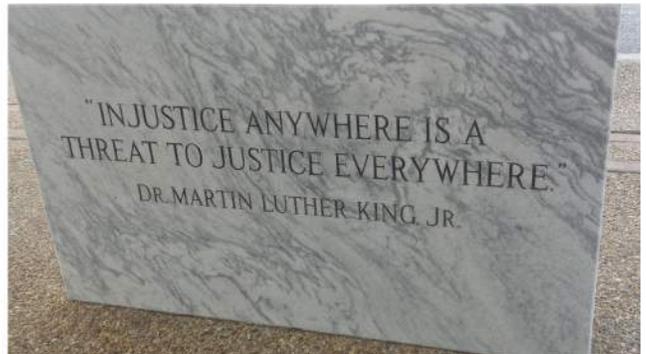
Latino working in the field in Louisiana



The South in so many words...



Seaside Farms in Beaufort, South Carolina – Latinos signing up for work



Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument in Biloxi, Mississippi



Latino store helping Latinos feel at home



Taqueria outside of Memphis



Latino stores are open for business throughout the south



Comfort food



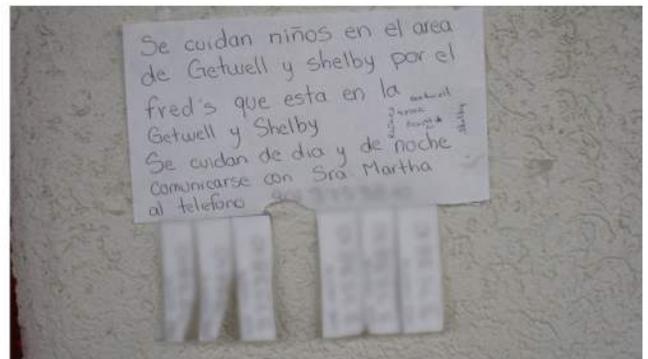
Latino store selling boots in Georgia



Pupusas in the middle of a southern town



La Tiendita in rural Louisiana as a Latino community center



Hard-working Latinas seeking employment



Voting hours in North Carolina



Moral Monday in North Carolina



A long history of Civil Rights in the Deep South



Latino radio in North Carolina: a sign of progress in the Deep South

Dennis DeLeon Sustainable Leadership Institute graduates meeting with Alabama State Representative Thad McClammy



Dennis DeLeon Sustainable Leadership Institute graduates meeting with Alabama State Representative Berry Forte



Free clinic in North Charleston, SC



Health educational brochure by Roberto Tovar in Louisiana

# ALABAMA

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

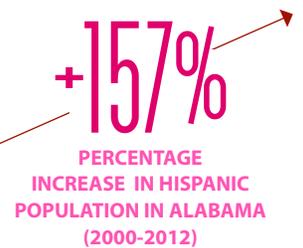
Alabama has a small but fast growing Hispanic population - the third fastest growing in the nation, increasing by 156.7% between 2000 and 2012. The average age is 25 years, with 36% under 18 years of age.<sup>71</sup> Fifty-four percent of the Hispanic population in Alabama was born in the U.S., and 27% speak only English at home.<sup>72</sup> The majority of Hispanics in Alabama are of Mexican descent or origin (69%), followed by Central American (15%), Caribbean (10%), “other Hispanic” (4%) and South American (3%).<sup>73</sup> Approximately 56,000 Hispanics in Alabama are eligible to vote.<sup>74</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent Hispanic population were Franklin, DeKalb, Marshall, Blount and Chilton.<sup>75</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are poultry production, automobile manufacturing, agriculture, service and sales.<sup>76</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics are \$18,000, compared to \$30,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$20,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks.<sup>77</sup> Among Latinos in Alabama, 27% of adults and 47% of children under 18 are living in poverty.<sup>78</sup>



AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN ALABAMA

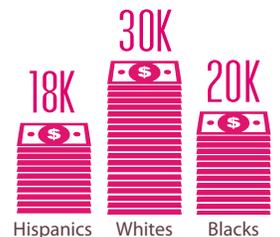
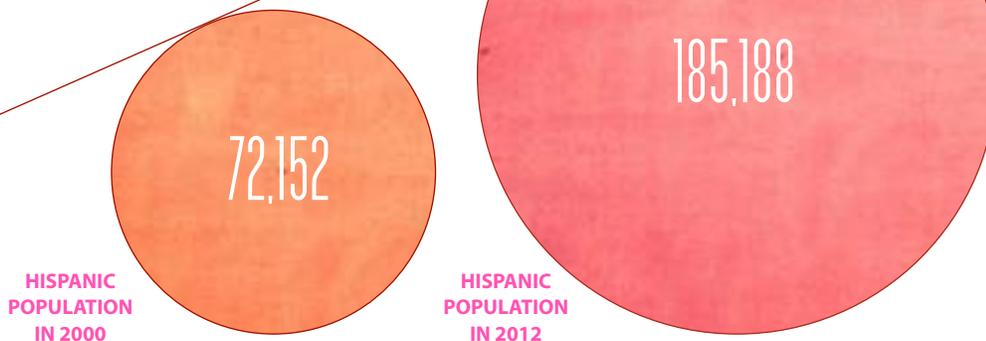


HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN ALABAMA (2000-2012)

### Hispanic Population Change in Alabama, 2000-2102<sup>79</sup>



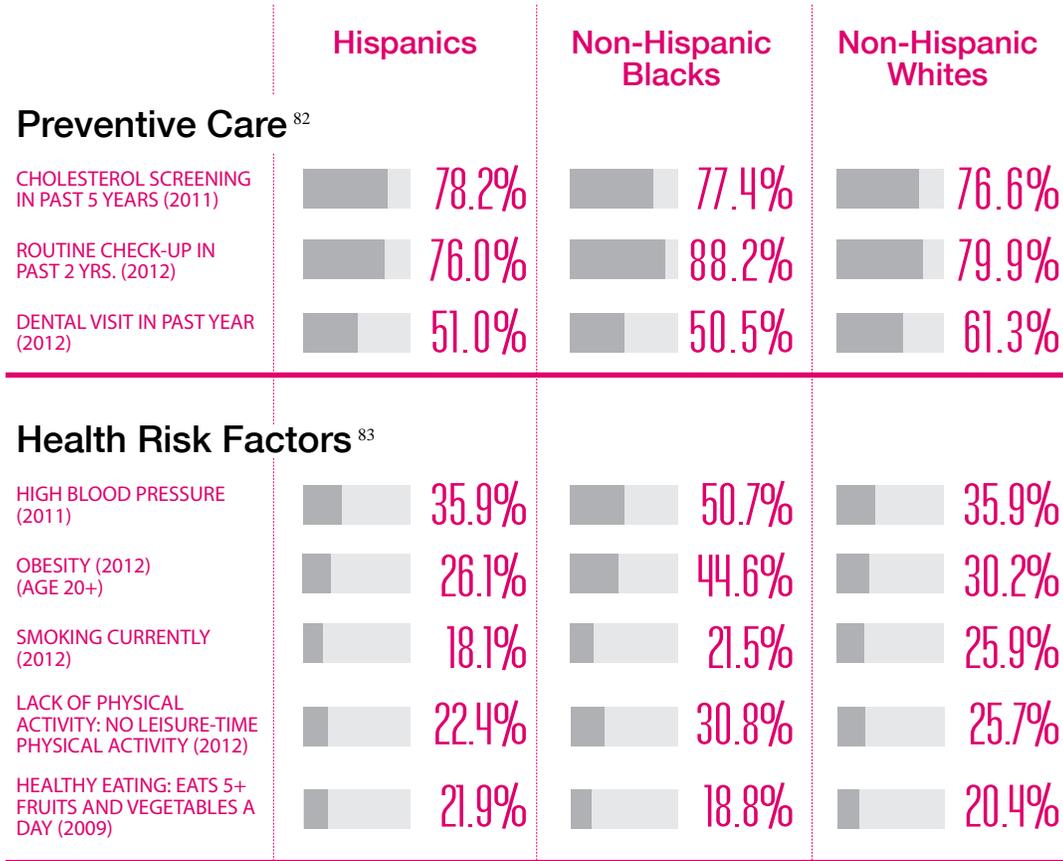
MEDIAN INCOME



PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY

# Key Health Indicators

As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 44% of Latinos in Alabama do not have health insurance (19% U.S. born and 72% foreign-born).<sup>80</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (12%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (18%).<sup>81</sup>



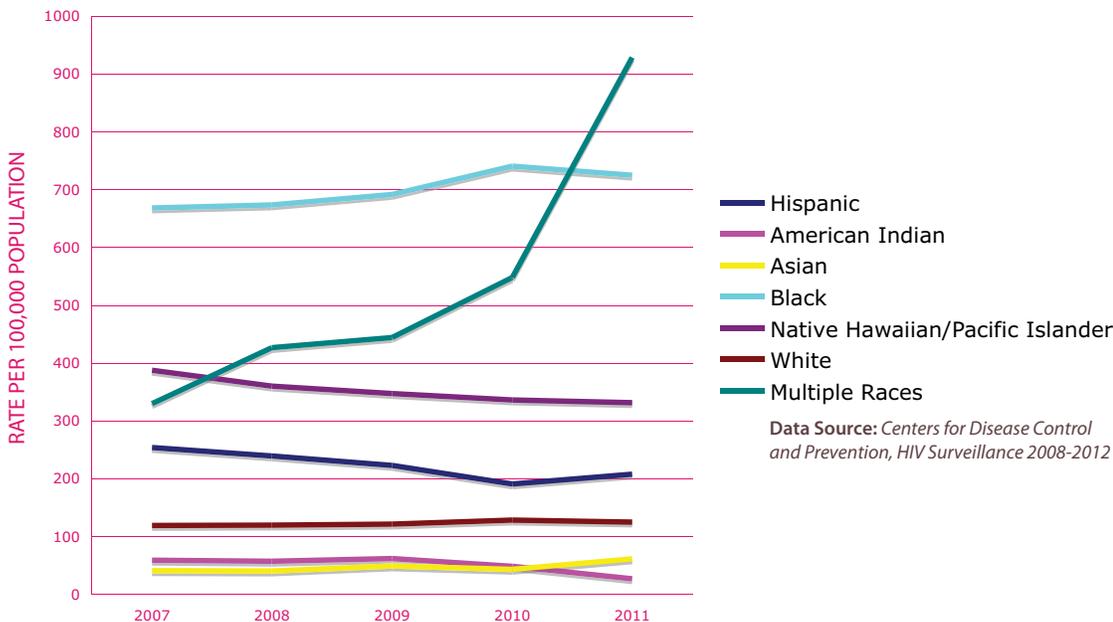
HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVELS OF SMOKING



HISPANICS EAT MORE HEALTHY FOODS AND GET MORE EXERCISE

THE GOOD  
THE BAD

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, Alabama



72%

PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE



HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF ROUTINE CHECK UPS

# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the Alabama legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include all those who made less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (which is \$23,850 for a family of four), and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance).

With about 660,000 uninsured Alabamans, 46% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>84</sup> As of February 2014, there were 118,000 Latinos in the state that were eligible and 27.5% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (32,000).<sup>85</sup>

Three organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance – Ascension Health, AIDS Alabama and Tombigbee Healthcare Authority.

# Immigration Law

In terms of institutionalized stigma, one of the nation’s harshest immigration bills was Alabama’s HB 56, which was designed to “*attack every aspect of an illegal alien’s life.*”<sup>86</sup> The bill, which passed in 2011, had the following key provisions:

- A ban on renting to undocumented immigrants,
- A requirement for police to check immigration papers, and
- A measure to ensure schools check student immigration status.

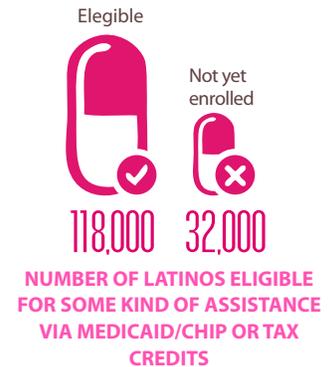
Furthermore, the bill made it a crime for legal residents and citizens to give a ride to undocumented immigrants.<sup>87</sup>

The Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (HICA) organized a coalition to fight the law that included immigrant’s rights groups, churches and an AIDS service organization. The coalition quickly filed a number of appeals and lawsuits, which slowed and eventually stopped many of the harshest provisions of the bill. As of 2013, the state of Alabama agreed to settle. The settlement bars the state from enforcing many of the provisions, restricts local police in checking immigrants status, and requires \$580,000 payment for attorney fees to several immigrant rights groups.<sup>88</sup>

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>89</sup> As of 2013, all 67 counties in Alabama participate in the Secure Communities program<sup>90</sup>. In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>91</sup>

The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>92</sup> As of February 2014, one county in Alabama had agreements with ICE to serve as participating entities in the 287(g) program – Etowah county - which has a 4% Latino population (3,673).<sup>93</sup> Most immigrant rights groups are against the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs citing that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources, and does not actually lead to finding violent criminals.<sup>94</sup>

Alabama does not have an immigration court and those who go through deportation proceedings do so in Georgia. <sup>95</sup> This is challenging for family members not only to find where the person is being held, but also to be able to visit and help navigate that system.



# Environmental Climate

The passage of HB 56 was like throwing a giant stone in a small pond; the ripples travel far, splash along the edges and take a long time to stabilize. HB 56 had a *widespread* impact, not only in Alabama, but neighboring states as well. Across interviewees and media sources, there was a clear connection between HB 56 and a palpable fear. *“We got calls about mass evictions from trailer parks, apartment complexes, chicken factories... there was an exodus. Everything was for sale; thousands left and went to neighboring states. Others went home [to their counties of origin]... they were scared their kids were going to be taken away,”* said one interviewee.

After HB 56 passed, countless stories of fear and isolation spread like wildfire around the state and country. One interviewee in northern Alabama recounted, *“I used to have a lady who cleaned my house, her daughter was born here, and when the bill came out, she asked me if I can care for her daughter if something happens to her, and that broke my heart.”* The immigration law’s impact on mixed status families, such as described above, is a key concern for families across the country, not only in Alabama. *“In mixed status and one parent families, there is the fear that their parents could be taken away, I think that’s something that affects your being----and that’s not just Alabama but everywhere,”* stated one interviewee.

Even in other states, interviewees described a fear that their state would “go the way of Alabama or Arizona.” Interestingly, several interviewees noted and several media sources from Arkansas featured advertisements in Alabama newspapers for Latino and other immigrant communities to migrate to more welcoming states (such as Arkansas). As a result of this environmental climate created by the passing of HB 56 community members and service providers alike became watchful and strategized for the worst-case scenario. Although the bill has now been largely dismantled, that fear still pinpricks the air and people remain prepared for a “just in case” scenario. One woman described a heart wrenching part of the Latino life in that *“people that are [worried] are establishing guardianship agreements for their kids on a regular basis. So just in case they’re deported... authorized them as a guardian to travel to Mexico or their country of origin, should the need present itself.”*

Another aspect of the emotional state of being in Alabama is that of race relations. Given the history of race relations in the state, it is no surprise that interviewees presented a complex and nuanced picture of how local Latinos fit into the historically Black-White race paradigm. Most interviewees reminded us of the deep roots of racism, contextualizing current local Latino experiences in the history of the state. Strong emotions were expressed as interviewees described race relations; for instance *fear* – White and Black fear of Latinos “taking over,” as well as Latino fear of discrimination and violence. *“I don’t think [Latinos] change the Black and White conversation, I think they add another conversation, which is citizen vs. non-citizen,”* stated one interviewee. This distinction around documentation was highlighted across several interviews and media sources as another, often more important, layer to community relations.

As such, Alabama continues to be in a state of transition where Latinos have a tenuous relationship with the social structure. One interviewee noted that, *“some people had a change of heart and at least weren’t as vocal [in terms of anti-immigrant sentiment] as they had been... There’s some really great work that’s happened, especially between Latino and African American; I know there have been some positive things that have come out of it and some people who have changed their minds.”*

**“We got calls about mass evictions from trailer parks, apartment complexes, chicken factories... there was an exodus.”**

— ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE



ALABAMA'S HB 56 BROUGHT MEMORIES OF THE HISTORY OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE STATE



THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY SUPPORTED HUMANE IMMIGRATION EFFORTS AS HISPANICS ARE SEEN AS BOTH A WORKFORCE AND AS CONSUMERS

Some of this change was attributed to an overall desire to increase the economic prosperity of the state as a whole. As one interviewee put it, *“economic prosperity supersedes people’s bigoted opinions.”* Businesses, and particularly in the banking and agricultural sectors, are seeing a burgeoning Latino market. Noting this growth in interest on the part of businesses, one interviewee noted that *“Money is the same color no matter who’s spending it. When we were fighting the horrible immigration law, the business community was on our side on that. As people were no longer able to hire farm workers, they had fields of crops rotting because white people didn’t want to do crappy jobs and get paid nothing”*. All in all, most of those interviewed see the urgent need to continue to dialogue, as well as conduct multicultural events and engage in mobilization efforts that bridge racial and ethnic divides.

## Tactics & Successes

*“I think one good thing that came out of HB 56, a lot of good, good agencies that advocate for the community”* – Latina Interviewee

With a new fight, old solutions are still relevant. Like many crises, HB 56 had the unintended consequence of invigorating and enlivening grassroots community groups. With its historic civil rights movements of those young and old alike, organizations and communities in Alabama were quick to reignite grassroots tactics that bind communities in crisis. One woman noted that *“[There is] just a whole mobilized grassroots community now that didn’t exist prior to 2011,”* and stated that 14 grassroots immigrant groups were formed across the state in reaction to HB 56. The immediate threat presented by HB 56 pushed agencies to develop creative strategies that raised knowledge of rights and brought together seasoned leaders and a whole new pool of grassroots leaders. Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, Alabama Appleseed, and the Southern Poverty Law Center were mentioned repeatedly as key organizers in the mobilization. *“People have been empowered and are doing a lot to fight for immigration reform; [it was] a catalyst,”* said another interviewee.

At the same time, organizers developed an array of new and innovative tactics to combat HB 56. The business community in Alabama took special notice when foreign executives,<sup>96</sup> such as a German national from the Mercedes-Benz company, were arrested for driving without a license.<sup>97</sup> Organizers seized these opportunities to build allies through shareholder meetings with international businesses, such as Hyundai, a Korean car company with plants in the U.S., including Alabama.<sup>98</sup> Fear that such powerhouse companies would move their plants, and thus disrupt the state economy, invigorated business leaders to rally against HB 56.

Since the repeal of HB 56, people generally describe life as improving for Latinos in the state, often exemplified by the increase of Latino-owned businesses such as restaurants, markets, and salons. Financial power is growing as well; banks see the buying power of the growing community and are offering bilingual services. With a bank account, many doors open to Latino families in Alabama.

Communication is key to community power. Radio stations such as *La Jefe* and newspapers like *El Lider* are signs of growing business and financial power in the state. The story of Hispanic radio in Alabama, as told by one Latino interviewee, is that of many other states in the southeast who have received new immigrants. Promoters from populous Latino states, such as California, saw potential and began bringing shows to the region, hiring local DJs and spurring entrepreneurship among local Latinos in the state. These efforts brought together business leaders in construction, grocery stores, restaurants, and other media. As the Alabama waters are calming after HB 56 and it is safer to be visible, many Latinos are making their way back to Alabama, making it home.



HB 56 ENDED UP INVIGORATING  
GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY  
GROUPS.

**“People have been  
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— ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE



AFTERMATH OF HB 56 HAS  
SEEN AN INCREASE OF  
LATINO-OWNED  
BUSINESSES



MEDIA AND RADIO STATIONS  
PROMOTE THE VISIBILITY OF  
LATINOS IN ALABAMA

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN ALABAMA

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“Hay temor de ir a las clínicas a causa de que nos pidan mucho información. Por ejemplo el de la pregunta, donde nacimos, de donde somos, también por las personas anti-inmigrantes. Así que hay desplego mucho miedo que hay de que va a pasar con esa información.”

—LATINA

## ON INVESTING IN EDUCATION

“I THINK THERE’S A DIFFERENCE FOR THOSE WITH COLLEGE DEGREES, YES. FOR THOSE WHO DON’T I THINK IT’S ABOUT THE SAME --STILL MAKING \$7.25 YEARS AGO AND NOW ITS WORSE BECAUSE MORE EXPENSIVE.”

—LATINA

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“THIS IS A NICE PLACE TO LIVE, BESIDES THE RACISM.”

—LATINA

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“Many of them have kids and a big percentage of them are now citizens, are able to vote and that’s a big picture that everyone’s missing. Immigrants are capable of good economic lifestyle because of their hardworking ethics, kids can now... some of them can go to college, can reach better steps in a new workforce. That’s a big force in our state.” —LATINO

# GEORGIA

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

At over 9% of the state’s population, Georgia experienced twice the national growth rate of Hispanics, increasing by 108% between 2000 and 2012.<sup>99</sup> The average age of Hispanics is 25 years, with 37% under 18 years of age.<sup>100</sup> Fifty-three percent of the Hispanic population in Georgia was born in the US, and 18% speak only English at home.<sup>101</sup> The majority of Hispanics in Georgia are of Mexican descent or origin (61%), followed by Central American (16%), Caribbean (13%), South American (8%) and “other Hispanic” (3%).<sup>102</sup> Approximately 274,000 Hispanics in Georgia are eligible to vote.<sup>103</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent Hispanic population were Whitfield, Echols, Hall, Atkinson and Stewart.<sup>104</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>105</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics are \$18,300, compared to \$31,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$25,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks.[cvii] Among Latinos in Georgia, 28% of adults and 41% of children under 18 years are living in poverty.<sup>107</sup>



AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN GEORGIA

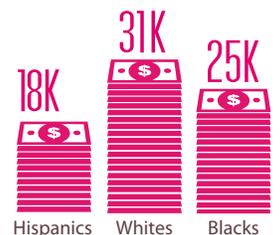
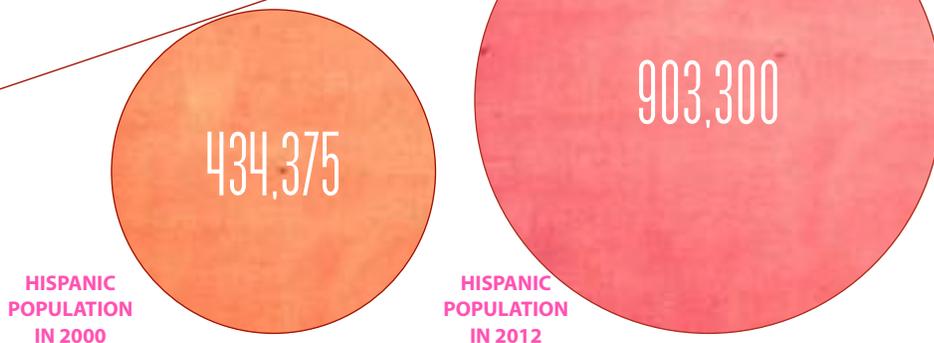


HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN GEORGIA (2000-2012)

### Hispanic Population Change in Georgia, 2000-2102<sup>108</sup>



MEDIAN INCOME



PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY

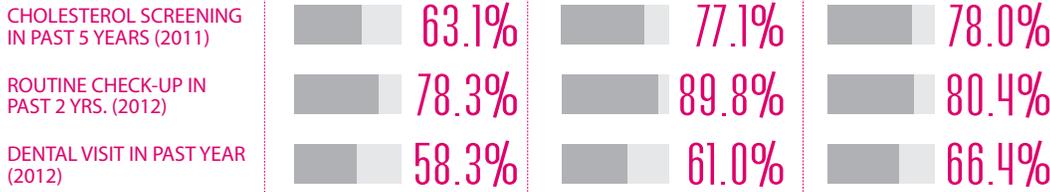
# Key Health Indicators

As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 45% of Latinos in Georgia do not have health insurance (22% U.S. born and 71% foreign-born).<sup>109</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (15%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (22%).<sup>110</sup>



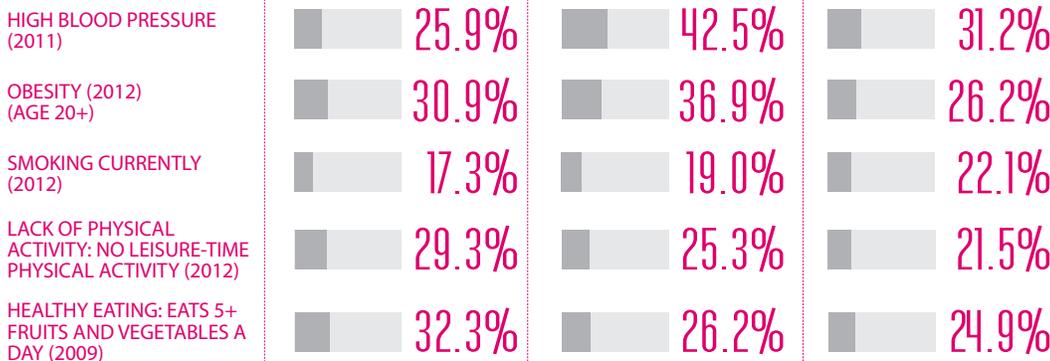
HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

## Preventive Care <sup>111</sup>



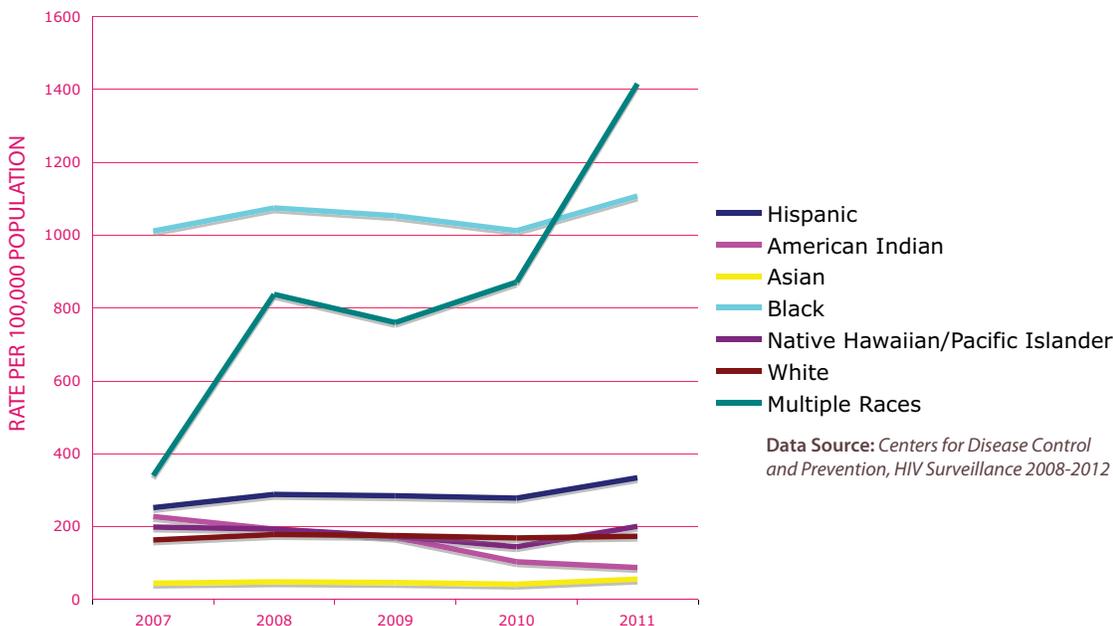
NEARLY 1 IN 3 HISPANICS EAT AT LEAST 5 FRUITS AND VEGETABLES A DAY

## Health Risk Factors <sup>112</sup>



THE GOOD  
THE BAD

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, Georgia



71%

PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE



HISPANICS GET THE LEAST PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## Health Care Reform

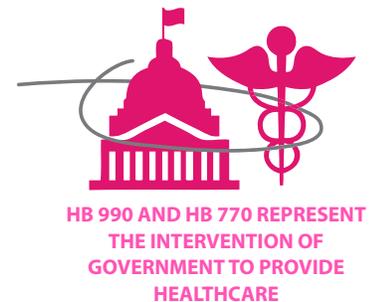
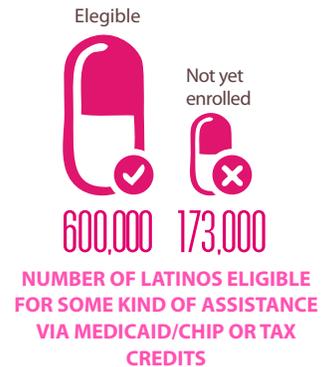
With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the Georgia legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance). With about 1.8 million uninsured Georgians, 45% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>113</sup> As of February 2014, there are 600,000 Latinos in the state that were eligible and 28.5% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (173,000).<sup>114</sup> Two organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance - Structured Employment Economic Development Organization (SEEDCO) and the University of Georgia.

Obstructionism to healthcare reform was particularly strong in Georgia, noted by interviewees and media sources. In particular, HB 990 prohibits the expansion of Medicaid without legislative approval,<sup>115</sup> while HB 770 prevents state agencies, local governments and their employees from advocating for Medicaid expansion.<sup>116</sup> So while HB 990 gives more power to the legislature on this issue, HB 770 restricts legislators’ ability to hear the opinions of constituents, particularly those working for the government. Interviewees widely echoed this sense of obstructionism and futility in the politics surrounding health care reform. *“The politics here are to blame,”* said one Hispanic man, *“...things are not going to change anytime soon due to the climate.”*

## Immigration Law

Over the past several years, Georgia has experienced strong legal and political climates of anti-immigrant sentiment, as evidenced by the introduction and passing of several key bills, such as HB 87, which included similar provisions to Arizona’s notorious SB 1070. <sup>117</sup> Many have argued that these types of bills create a climate of fear, not only for undocumented individuals but for most Hispanics. Interviewees in Georgia clearly described a continuing state of fear showcasing that Latinos have a tenuous relationship with the Georgia social structure. Among the wide-range of provisions, HB 87 punished citizens “transporting or harboring” undocumented immigrants (section 7), increased immigration enforcement by local authorities and required employers to check immigration status (such as through E-verify). Since its passage in 2011, coalitions of immigrant rights groups, as well as some surprising supporters including the small-town mayor of Uvalda, Georgia,<sup>118</sup> have been fighting various provisions of the law, many of which have since been blocked, including section 7. Coalitions remain vigilant and continue to fight against new legislation.

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases. <sup>119</sup> As of 2013, all 159 counties in Georgia participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>120</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>121</sup>



The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>122</sup> As of February 2014, four counties in Georgia had agreements with ICE to serve as participating entities in the 287(g) program – Cobb, Gwinnett, Hall and Whitfield counties – counties with high populations of Latinos.<sup>123</sup>

The Georgia Immigration Court besides handling cases from Georgia also sees cases from Alabama. Considering that The Georgia Immigration Court sees cases from more than one state, it is somewhat surprising that the number of deportations for violation of immigration rules peaked in 2011 at 12,310, and has decreased yearly since down to fewer than 7,000 in 2013. However, do note that Georgia courts have the second highest percentages of arrests to deportations in the country.<sup>124</sup> One of the health consequences of this program as an interviewee highlighted to us is that: “[Latinos] just don’t have appropriate access to health care... many of the metro areas with 287(g), they would not go to access health care”.

## Environmental Climate

Across interviews, media and surveys, Georgians had a keen sense of the political climate which essentially was pervasive, and described the impact of anti-immigrant legislation on the family, specifically on youth, intergenerational relationships, and mobilizing for the future. National immigration programs, such as the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) program were highlighted here more than in the other states.

Like Alabama, Georgians described a “mass exodus” following the passage of one of the harshest anti-immigrant law in the country - HB 87. Passage of this law essentially “marked” those who might not have legal status and created a climate of discrimination, ostracism and negatively valuing those who look or seem Latino. Discrimination or prejudice is a potential outcome of this “marking” or stigma, essentially an *institutionalized stigma*. Possibly as a result of HB 87 and its resulting microcosm of fear and heightened encounters with institutionalized stigma, Georgia interviewees noted instances of discrimination slightly more often than those from other states.

One such institution that was mentioned repeatedly when talking about the stigmatized lives of Latinos was that of law enforcement agencies. Notably, while law enforcement mission statements in Georgia differ by jurisdiction, many include language around ensuring safety, building trust and improving quality of life.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, law enforcement agencies have been key allies in some other states in the Deep South. However, Georgians tended to describe discrimination and hostility as a key feature of the relationship between police and local Hispanic communities after the passage of HB 87. This pervasive discrimination and hostility often came in the form of racial profiling. One story told to us by a Latina in Georgia really brought home the point of how Latinos often live in these microclimates of fear often promulgated by law enforcement. She passionately noted “He [the sheriff] is hitting roads and taking money from them (\$700-800); I’ve had people come complain, and the chisme [gossip], they tell me that they are sick and tired of giving their money away”. A startling media report noted that two Georgia residents were indicted with charges that they were conspiring with the local police department to unlawfully stop and demand Hispanic motorists and demand money to avoid arrest or deportation.<sup>126</sup>



UNDER SECURE COMMUNITIES, FINGERPRINTS OF THOSE ARRESTED (NOT NECESSARILY CHARGED) FOR EVEN MINOR CRIMES, WERE CROSS-CHECKED WITH IMMIGRATION DATABASES



HB 87 OPENED DOORS FOR PERVASIVE DISCRIMINATION AND HOSTILITY IN THE FORM OF RACIAL PROFILING



HISPANIC DAILY LIFE WAS AFFECTED BY INSTITUTIONALIZED STIGMA THAT RESULTED IN DISCRIMINATION OR PREJUDICE

Discrimination also marks the workplace, where interviewees described cases of employers taking advantage of Latino workers, particularly those that were undocumented. An activist in Georgia noted that *“if an accident happens on the job to me [as a white man], I would be told about workers’ comp. But if undocumented, the boss won’t say anything.”*

One Latina shared a story of how discrimination is perpetuated in a health care setting. *“En el departamento de salud, no son tratados, y los andan paseando de hospital a hospital. Esa es una, aunque sea en emergencias no los atiende. Los niños en el hospital... la niña tenía vomito y diarrea, un señor los llevo al hospital los tuvo allí de las 3-11PM y nunca la atendieron.”* An incident such as this is particularly disturbing and unjust. Sadly, we were told of other such incidents. Another Hispanic man stated, *“It is hostile, if you look and sound different you’re a suspect... Latinos are being asked for more documentation than others.”* In each of these settings, from the road to the workplace to the clinic, one can see the institutional stigmatizing barriers that are in place for Latinos hindering their progress.

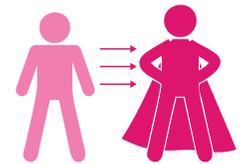
In Georgia, youth notably fit into the future of the local Latino community very prominently. Youth are seen as *hope*, as a key part of the solution to build a strong and secure community in the future – transportation, education, electoral power, and economic development. Adults have restrictions that their children may not. *“Many people don’t have a lot of opportunities because they don’t want to go very far due to lack of license,” one Latina mother said. “It’s also about having a social security number.”* Young adults and adult children can unlock the door. Her son commented following this conversation thread, *“The work ethic of ‘get a job, support your family’, it’s usually seen in the kids that were born in the U.S. My sister [who was born in the US] has an opportunity that I don’t. I am a DACA student.”*

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a federal program that delays immigration prosecution to certain individuals who entered the U.S. as children<sup>127</sup> – often called “DREAMers” after the failed Act that would have provided a conditional pathway to citizenship to those with “good moral character” who were brought to the country as minors.<sup>128</sup> With the legislature’s failure to pass the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act, President Obama’s administration authored the DACA memorandum. DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship and it does not give the individual legal status.<sup>129</sup> The stated goal of the program is to help the immigration system by keeping low-risk individuals from using deportation resources. Those young people whose DACA requests are approved are able to remain in the U.S. for 2 years and are usually allowed to pursue education or employment. However, there are many restrictions. For instance, DACA students are not allowed to enroll in several universities and colleges in the state University System of Georgia.<sup>130</sup>

While youth are seen as the “Great Latino Hope”, many of the Georgia interviewees described a generational divide. Some of this is cultural: *“We see a lot of the loss of Latino culture within the new generation, they don’t speak the Spanish or they are more focused on being Americanized,”* said one Latina. Another Latina interviewee described how acculturation is impacting the divide between generations in terms of health outcomes. *“La comunidad Latina de la primera generación es una de las mas saludables en comparación de la segunda generación. Los hijos o nuestros hijos de la segunda generación empezaran a padecer de los problemas regulares de esta población Americana. Lo que veo la azúcar, no se atiende precisamente por la falta de acceso y discriminación.”*



HISPANICS FEEL DISCRIMINATED DURING INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT, AT HEALTH CARE SETTINGS, AND IN THE WORKPLACE



YOUTH ARE SEEN BY HISPANICS AS A GROUP WITH A PROMISING FUTURE



DACA REPRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY, FOR THOSE WHO CAME TO AMERICA AS MINORS, TO PURSUE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Another cause of the generational divide are the immigration laws as they have a grand impact on the family unit. *“There is a lot of tension with immigration issues in Georgia... you have families who have 5-6 kids and they [the parents] can’t drive. Families that just go out and buy food, they are in the shadows, and that creates a lot of social problems within the families,”* said one Latina. Another man describes the day-to-day life impact on families. *“[One of the] biggest concerns is having a way to function and not worry about getting arrested. From the time you wake up and you have to bring your kids to school or go to the grocery store, it becomes an odyssey to see, ‘will I get stopped by the police without having a license?’”*

## Tactics & Successes

The fight against HB 87 fueled greater mobilization, advocacy and engagement across ethnicities and ages. For instance, as has been noted youth represent grand hope for the local Latino community. During these past few years where there have been political threats of expanding anti-immigrant legislation, youth have been playing a key role. An interviewee noted *“Now since Obama’s DACA, young undocumented students are willing to step out, identifying as undocumented, saying that it’s not fair and you have to change the law. That has given the community heart and courage.”*

While youth are raising their voices, dialogue in the community has also reportedly become more engaged, outspoken and nuanced. Furthermore, that sense of community dialogue and interaction has also led to many Latinos doing what they can to help each other out. One particularly creative coping tactic is using social media or text messages to send waves of alerts regarding roadblocks and checkpoints. One Latina describes: *“I was speaking at a college, and people were texting, there was a roadblock checking for driver’s licenses. [This strategy] is common with radio DJs; they’ve adopted a certain code and language to share this information.”* Georgians also spoke of how organizations and agencies were also raising their voices and were as such key leaders in the state for Latino issues including Georgia Equality, GALEO, Latin American Association, Caminar Latino and Dalton Coalition de la Latinos.

Several interviewees described agencies that design services specifically around the Latino community. For instance, the International Medical Center and CEPTA reportedly serve primarily Latino community members, upwards of 90%, making staffing, policies and programs that are particularly friendly to the community. Some examples of that Latino friendly environment includes hiring bilingual and bicultural staff, literally meeting people where they are at (sometimes at Wal-Mart), educating through popular channels like Univision and radio PSAs, and utilizing popular program models such as the *promotora* model where community health workers are trained to spread health information and resources. These are successful tactics that can be used as models for agencies and businesses seeking to reach Latino community members.



**“We see a lot of the loss of Latino culture within the new generation, they don’t speak the Spanish or they are more focused on being Americanized”**

— LATINA



**HB 87 ENDED UP INVIGORATING MOBILIZATION, ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS ACROSS ETHNICITIES AND AGES**



**HISPANICS ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO SEND WAVES OF ALERT REGARDING ROADBLOCKS AND CHECKPOINTS**



**MANY BUSINESSES THAT SERVE THE LATINO COMMUNITY ARE BECOMING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TO HISPANIC NEEDS**

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN GEORGIA

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“If you came into the rural issues, we don’t have a dairy queen, we don’t have one. We lost it. We have a lot of Mexican stores, four to be exact, but we have something very few of these counties have - a non profit that looks out for the well being of the community”

—LATINA

## ON OBAMACARE

“ [AS FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM], IF WE ARE UNDOCUMENTED WE DIDN’T REALLY THINK ABOUT IT. PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT AS GOOD/BAD/RIGHT/WRONG. IT DIDN’T CHANGE ANYTHING FOR OUR KIDS.”

—LATINA

“IT IS HOSTILE, IF YOU LOOK AND SOUND DIFFERENT YOU’RE A SUSPECT... LATINOS ARE BEING ASKED FOR MORE DOCUMENTATION THAN OTHERS.”

—LATINA

“Tienes la HB 87 que nosotros decimos que es mas ruido que nueces, verdad? Pero eso ha cambiado en grande la percepción de nuestra comunidad, de afuera de la comunidad Latina de cómo eres visto y como eres tratado.”

—LATINA

# LOUISIANA

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

Louisiana’s Hispanic population grew at a somewhat higher rate than the nation as a whole.<sup>131</sup> The average age of Hispanics is 29 years, with 28% under 18 years of age.<sup>132</sup> Fifty-six percent of the Hispanic population in South Carolina was born in the U.S., and 33% speak only English at home.<sup>133</sup> A plurality of Hispanics in Louisiana is of Mexican descent or origin (39%), followed by Central American (29%), and Caribbean (15%), “other Hispanic” (12%) and South American (6%).<sup>134</sup> Louisiana has an interesting longstanding relationship with Latino populations and as such has a higher percentage of “other” than other states in the Deep South. Approximately 94,000 Hispanics in Louisiana are eligible to vote.<sup>135</sup> Across the state, the parishes with the largest percent Hispanic population were Jefferson, St. Bernard, Vernon, Bossier and St. Mary.<sup>136</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>137</sup> Relative to other states in the South, Hispanics in Louisiana reported slightly higher earnings, possibly due to having a long-standing population and more economically diverse local Latino communities that represent higher-paid industries, such as medical and petrochemical. The median personal earnings for Hispanics are \$21,000, compared to \$31,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$19,200 for non-Hispanic Blacks. Among Latinos in Louisiana, 19% of adults and 42% of children under 18 years are living in poverty.<sup>138</sup>



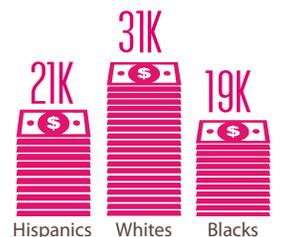
AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN LOUISIANA



HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN LOUISIANA (2000-2012)

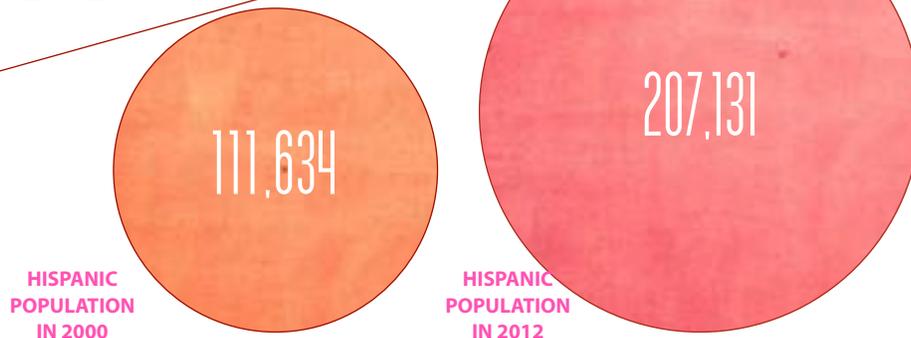


MEDIAN INCOME



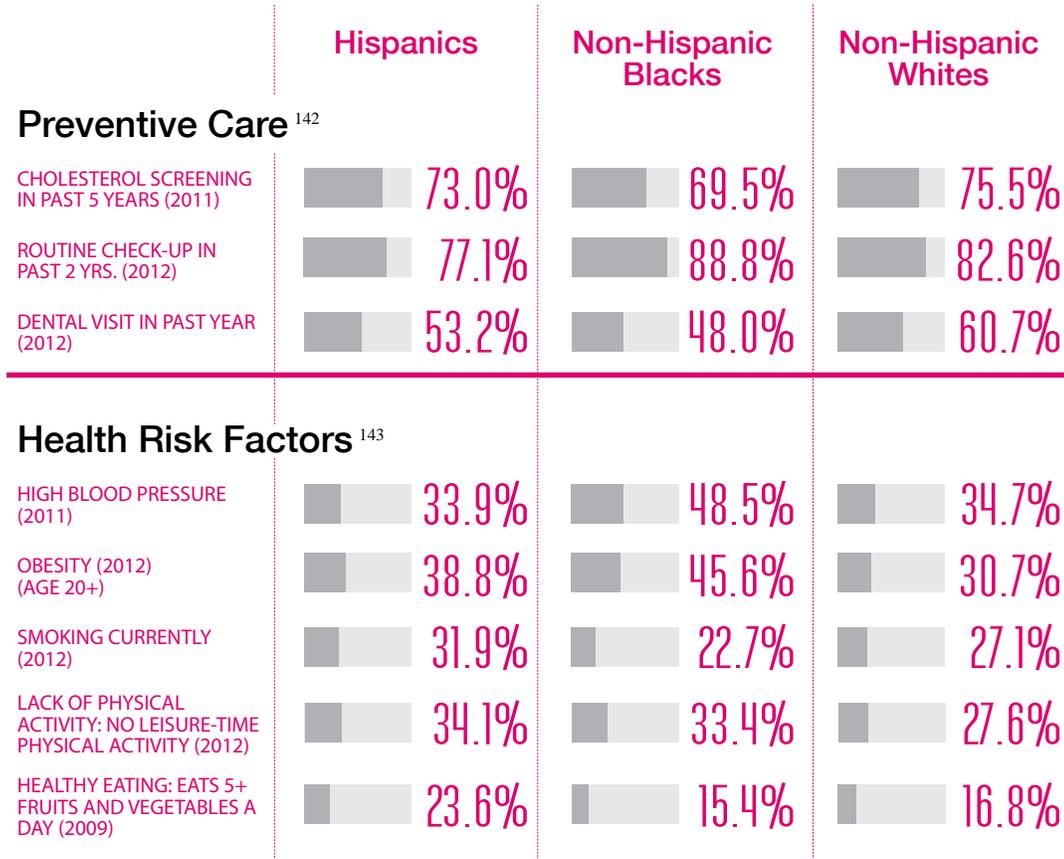
PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY

### Hispanic Population Change in Louisiana, 2000-2012<sup>139</sup>



# Key Health Indicators

Health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare; that being said, 40% of Latinos in Louisiana do not have health insurance (19% U.S. born and 66% foreign-born).<sup>140</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (14%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (23%).<sup>141</sup>



HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



HISPANICS EAT THE HEALTHIEST (BUT GET THE LEAST PHYSICAL ACTIVITY)

THE GOOD  
THE BAD

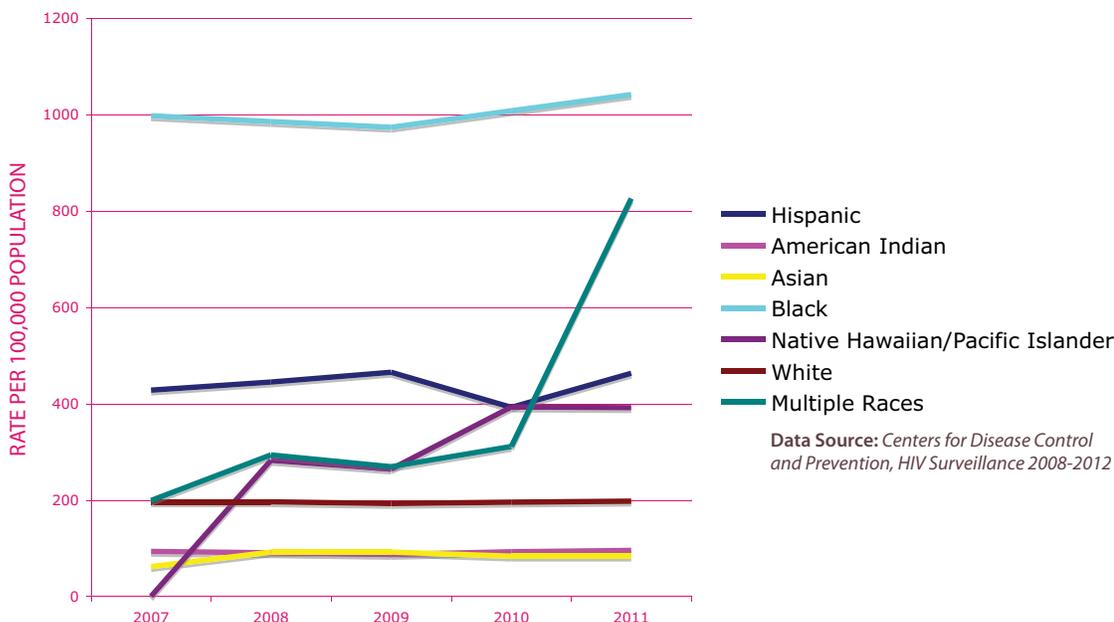
66%

PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE



HISPANICS HAVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF SMOKING

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, Louisiana



# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the Louisiana legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance).

With about 866,000 uninsured Louisianans, 49% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>144</sup> As of February 2014, there were 145,000 Latinos in the state that were eligible and 32.4% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (47,000).<sup>145</sup> Four organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance – Southern United Neighborhoods, Martin Luther King Health Center, Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center, and Capital Area Agency on Aging.



# Immigration Law

Shortly after Arizona passed the infamous “*Show me your Papers*” law in 2010, the Louisiana House of Representatives introduced HB 1205, a copycat bill that aimed to extend restrictions even further, including requiring all those over 14 years old to show documentation to receive services, making it illegal to shelter or transport anyone without documents, and requiring law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of all those brought in.<sup>146</sup> Although the bill “died in committee,” aspects of the bill were carried forward, specifically the E-verify portion (HCR 178) which urges employers to verify immigration status.<sup>147</sup> Although an Arizona-style bill never passed, some have argued that these threats created a climate of fear, for both undocumented and documented individuals; interviews in Louisiana clearly described an electrified environment post-2010.



NUMBER OF LATINOS ELIGIBLE FOR SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE VIA MEDICAID/CHIP OR TAX CREDITS

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>148</sup> As of 2013, all 64 parishes in Louisiana participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>149</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>150</sup>



LOUISIANA HB 1205, A BILL THAT DIDN'T PASS, WAS A COPYCAT OF ARIZONA'S SB 1070

The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>151</sup> Similar to Mississippi and Tennessee, as of 2014 there are no counties in Mississippi that are in the 297(g) program.<sup>152</sup> Most immigrant rights groups are against the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs citing multiple reasons including that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources and does not impact finding violent criminals.<sup>153</sup>



IMMIGRANT VIOLATION DEPORTATION IS A CONSTANT THREAT TO UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE

Immigration violation deportations as ordered by the Louisiana immigration court, which also sees cases from Mississippi, have been on a bit of a rollercoaster ride the last few years. After peaking in 2008, the number of deportations for violation of immigration (not including other criminal charges) dipped and rose back up to over 7,000 per year in 2011. Since then, the number has dramatically decreased, with 2,345 deportations in 2014. Louisiana courts have the ninth highest number of immigration-based deportations in the U.S.<sup>154</sup> One community organizer in New Orleans stated: *“To me the biggest thing is the constant threat of deportations. [It’s] impossible for service providers or schools to create leadership development plans.”*

# Environmental Climate

Ask anyone in Louisiana *What is life like for Latinos* and a typical answer may very well be like this one give to us by a Latina in Louisiana: ***“Depends on which Latino you ask, and I’m not being a smart ass. My experience is far different than community members we work with, it’s worlds different”***. And according to interviewees, it depends on two things in particular: whether one has documentation and what is one’s social or professional class. Not unlike other areas in the nation, a documented immigration status is a key to a higher quality of life, freedom of mobility, access to insurance, benefits, and overall less fear.

Another key is social status, which often overlaps with documentation status. Across the state, interviewees discussed the life of immigrant Cuban and Argentinean doctors as well as Venezuelan engineers in Louisiana. Interviewees tended to describe those who came for professional reasons as having a higher quality of life, and also as those that have tended to integrate with the local communities. One Latina in northern Louisiana said: ***“People from Honduras don’t mix much with the doctors from LSU [Louisiana State University]. I try to do something different with each of the groups. The people that are coming from Argentina have papers and make a lot of money. They don’t have the same needs as people from Honduras that don’t have papers.”***

These Latinos that have been in the state for decades now have adult children who interviewees also described as very integrated. As one Latina described it these divisions are everywhere: ***“Here in New Orleans, Latinos have assimilated and had children here... there was a division, ‘don’t put us in the same box [as the undocumented].’ Even the activists, the things they say are very much ‘us and them,’ we are going to help them assimilate in the system... I understand Latinos are not homogenous groups... [the] immigration debate thing has divided Latinos. It’s us versus them; it’s this American dichotomy.”***

In order to understand this assimilation and integration story a bit more one needs to take into account that the story of Latinos in Louisiana often begins in Honduras. Honduran immigrants began arriving in New Orleans generations ago through connections with the United Fruit Company, which is based in Central America. Many Hondurans arrived in New Orleans to work as dockyard laborers. However, there were also many upper class Hondurans who sent their children to study at Catholic schools in New Orleans. It was a different type of migration pattern that many often overlook or do not even know about. Hondurans didn’t tend to settle into specific “Latino” areas, which led to Hondurans assimilating into the city.

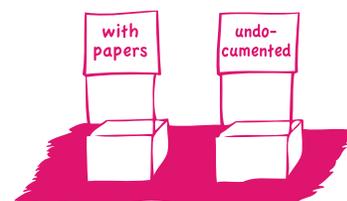
Now, from Hondurans’ initial arrivals to Louisiana early last century, fast-forward to the 2000s. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Hispanic immigrants were described as instrumental in rebuilding New Orleans. As one Latino proudly noted, ***“Latinos came and moved the garbage, in HAZMAT suits and gutted their homes, they rebuild them. I’m met with responses of gratitude and it’s been almost 10 years since Katrina.”*** Some of those who came for reconstruction have settled in New Orleans and the surrounding area. Before, Hondurans used to be spread throughout New Orleans. After Katrina, there are now pockets of Hispanic neighborhoods, although they are still somewhat physically distant from one another.

After these Katrina-changes took place whereby Latino-specific neighborhoods could be identified, safety concerns for undocumented Latinos arose in part due to institutionalized stigma policies. Listen to how one Latina describes the situation: ***“After Katrina, Latinos were targeted and there was a lot of theft, not because they were Latinos necessarily, but because they were seen as ‘walking ATMs.’ The system did not allow for bank accounts***

**SAME  
BUT  
DIFFERENT**

**“Depends on which Latino you ask, and I’m not being a smart ass. My experience is far different than community members we work with...”**

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE  
ON HOW LIFE IS LIKE FOR  
LATINOS



HAVING OR NOT HAVING  
IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS  
HAS BECOME AN ELEMENT THAT  
DIFFERENTIATES THE LIFE OF  
LATINOS



EDUCATED LATINOS WHO  
HOLD PROFESSIONAL DEGREES  
EARN MORE MONEY AND THUS  
HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS THAN  
WORKING-CLASS LATINOS



LATINOS ARE SEEN WITH  
GRATITUDE FOR THEIR  
CONTRIBUTION TO REBUILDING  
HOUSES DAMAGED BY KATRINA

*[for undocumented individuals] and so they would carry large amounts of cash with them and get assaulted or held up.”*

While many settled in parts of Louisiana there are groups of travelling workers, namely men, moving from town to town for work, both in Louisiana and across the South. Unlike the local Latino communities around New Orleans, migrating workers seem to be much less integrated into the local community. On the other hand, many Latinos who are more settled have been opening small businesses to serve the unique needs of the local Latino community. In the small town of Leesville, a Latin market sits on the highway wooing in customers with their new Goya sign. The owners are welcoming and friendly; taking great pride in meeting the local community needs stating that customers can request anything and that they will do their best to get it stocked in the small store. In Bossier, a string of restaurants and tiendas are booming, along with a dotting of Latin clubs and restaurants, described two local Latina leaders.



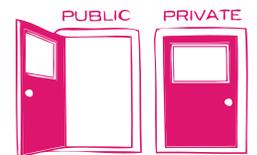
TRAVELLING WORKERS, WHO MOVE PERIODICALLY FOR WORK, ARE THE LEAST INTEGRATED INTO THE COMMUNITY

While we have noted that quality of life varies widely across these Louisiana Latino communities, two common challenges did weigh heavily among the majority of those interviewed – discrimination in the education system and the privatization of the public hospitals in the state. Interviewees across the state shared several stories of institutionalized discrimination in the local school systems. **“Latinos students are being taken out of class for ESL and are getting behind in math and science,”** described one Latina. In 2012, the Southern Poverty Law Center filed suit against the Jefferson School District for creating a hostile environment for students where teachers routinely interrogate them about their immigration status and use racial slurs. A three-year settlement was made with key steps the district must take, including training, policies and a bilingual parent board.<sup>155</sup>



CASES WERE FOUND WHERE TEACHERS ASKED STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS

Interviewees also echoed major concerns with one of the biggest healthcare news stories in the state: Governor Jindal’s plan to privatize Charity Hospitals.<sup>156</sup> Charity Hospitals are one of the few places that undocumented immigrants have access to health care. In speaking with local Honduran community members at a restaurant in Lafayette, these hospitals are the main place where they can go to get care, with translation via phone. One Latina physician described, **“When we had the public hospitals that was one thing. Now the public/private partnership changed everything. CMS [Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services] recently ruled that partnership was an illegal partnership.”** As of the fall of 2014, the issue has yet to be completely resolved, although major changes have already occurred including massive staff turnover.



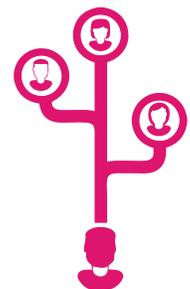
CHARITY HOSPITALS TURNED INTO PRIVATE ENTITIES AND WITH IT, MANY HISPANICS SAW A BARRIER TO ACCESS HEALTH CARE

## Tactics & Successes

Local Latino communities and organizations are using two different cultural tactics to address challenges, injustice and inequity – integrating into the larger culture and retaining culture.

**Integrating:** One interviewee in southwestern Louisiana stated that **“about 30 years ago, there was another wave of Latino immigrants, professionals, engineers. At that point there was a ‘Latin club’ that did social events. Since then, the club has closed and all have since integrated into the English-speaking community.”** Some find that blending in and integrating with other local communities opens doors.

**Retaining Culture:** Local Latino communities are creating microcosms of various aspects of Latin culture. From *molotes* in Houma, to *pupusas* in Lafayette, to *chincharon* in Leesville, local Latinos are making Louisiana home, as much as they can. Within these microcosms, trusted networks are formed. Everyone knows to go to one woman for problems with the schools, another man for help with permits, and



LATINO COMMUNITIES ARE CREATING MICROCOSMS; AND WITHIN, A TRUSTED NETWORK OF RESOURCES

another woman to help with the police. ***“There is a sense of solidarity beyond the divisions; I have experienced and felt this,”*** said one Latina. Another man recognizes that Latinos are still invisible in the state: ***“Louisiana has the world’s largest nursery community with huge pockets of Latinos there planting. There are not a lot of resources for them except themselves.”***

Organizations and individuals are making small but significant steps to helping the local community. NO/AIDS, a New Orleans-based AIDS service organization, is going the extra mile for Latinos in many ways, one of which is providing letters for undocumented clients to carry with them in case of arrest. According to several interviewees, this seems to be helping. Another example is that of The Congress of Day Laborers, a membership organization, which convenes around 300 members on a weekly basis to plan strategies and tactics to stop the ICE raids and deportations in the area. One lawyer described feeling helpless because she couldn’t change her clients’ status, however began taking smaller steps to help improve the lives of her local community. She said, ***“I can’t help you with your legal work, but I can tell you a bank down the street will work with you to open a bank account, no need for papers.”*** These may seem small but they are really important successes.



**HISPANICS HAVE FORMED  
STRATEGIC GROUPS TO  
HELP STOP RAIDS AND  
DEPORTATIONS**

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN LOUISIANA

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“What I’ve noticed is that is more common in first and second generation of Latinos living here in Louisiana - they’re not ashamed to speak Spanish. When I arrived almost 15 years ago, even if they spoke Spanish they didn’t like speaking Spanish. But younger groups that go to the universities, they try to speak Spanish even if they don’t do it well. I think that’s a positive change and they are accepting their culture, and their origins.” —LATINO

## IN BECOMING MORE VISIBLE

“IF YOU GO TO WAL-MART, THEY HAVE A HISPANIC FOOD AISLE. THAT HAPPENED AFTER KATRINA, BEFORE KATRINA WE DIDN’T HAVE THAT. YOU NEVER HEARD HISPANIC MUSIC IN A WINN-DIXIE SUPERMARKET, NOW YOU DO.”

—LATINO

“LATINOS ARE NOT ON THE NEWS. THEY DON’T HAVE TIME TO APPEAR ON THE NEWS.” —LATINA

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“Migrant and agricultural workers have become very stable with grown up kids and educated kids; parents are also becoming more educated.” —LATINA

# MISSISSIPPI

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

Mississippi's Hispanic population has more than doubled since 2000.<sup>157</sup> The average age is 28 years, with 34% under 18 years of age.<sup>158</sup> Fifty-seven percent of the Hispanic population in Mississippi was born in the U.S., and 31% speak only English at home.<sup>159</sup> The majority of Hispanics in Mississippi are of Mexican descent or origin (77%), followed by Caribbean (9%), Central American (7%), "other Hispanic" (5%), and South American (4%).<sup>160</sup> Approximately 31,000 Hispanics in Mississippi are eligible to vote.<sup>161</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent Hispanic population were Scott, Adams, Pontotoc, Tallahatchie and Calhoun.<sup>162</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>163</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics is \$18,000, compared to \$30,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$19,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks. Among Latinos in Mississippi, 34% of adults and 48% of children under 18 are living in poverty.<sup>164</sup>



AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN MISSISSIPPI

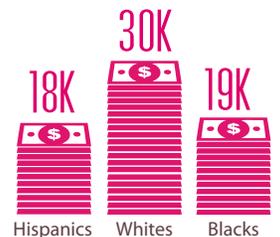
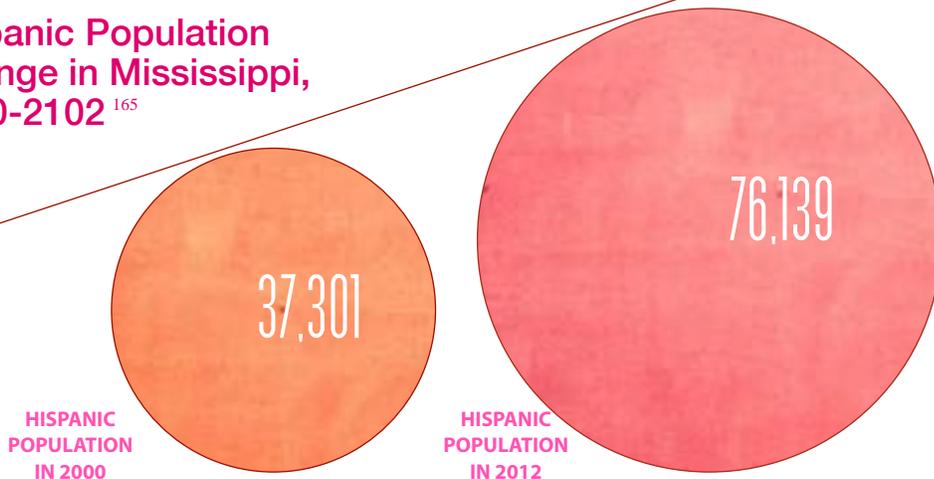


HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

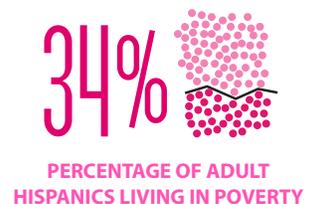


PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN MISSISSIPPI (2000-2012)

Hispanic Population Change in Mississippi, 2000-2102<sup>165</sup>



MEDIAN INCOME



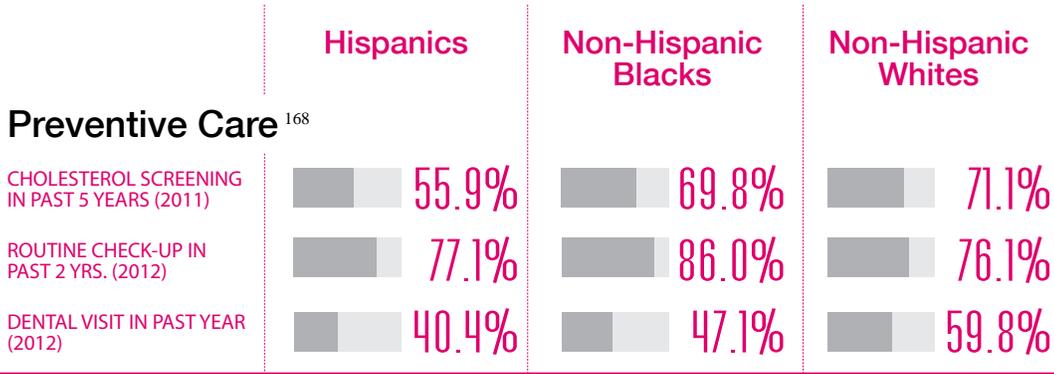
PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY

# Key Health Indicators

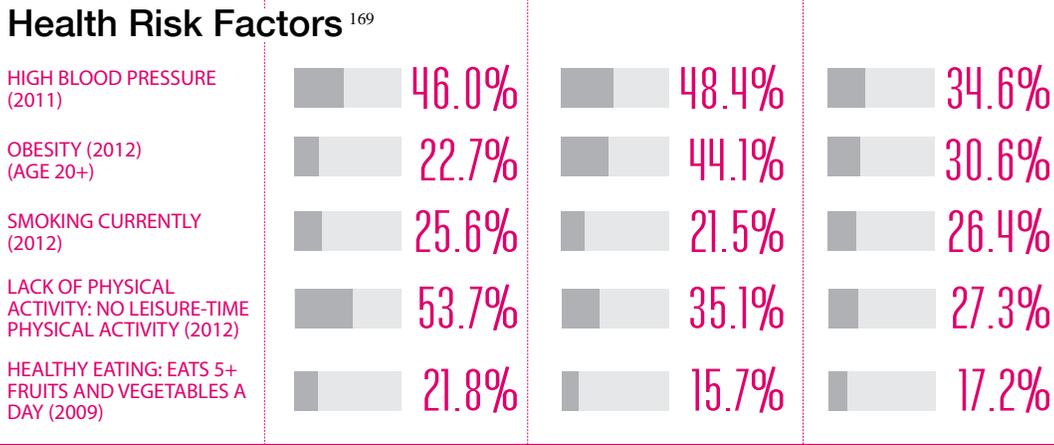
As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 43% of Latinos in Mississippi do not have health insurance (18% of those born in the U.S. and 76% of those foreign-born).<sup>166</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (14%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (22%).<sup>167</sup>



HISpanics HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF OBESITY



HISpanics EAT THE MOST HEALTHY FOODS

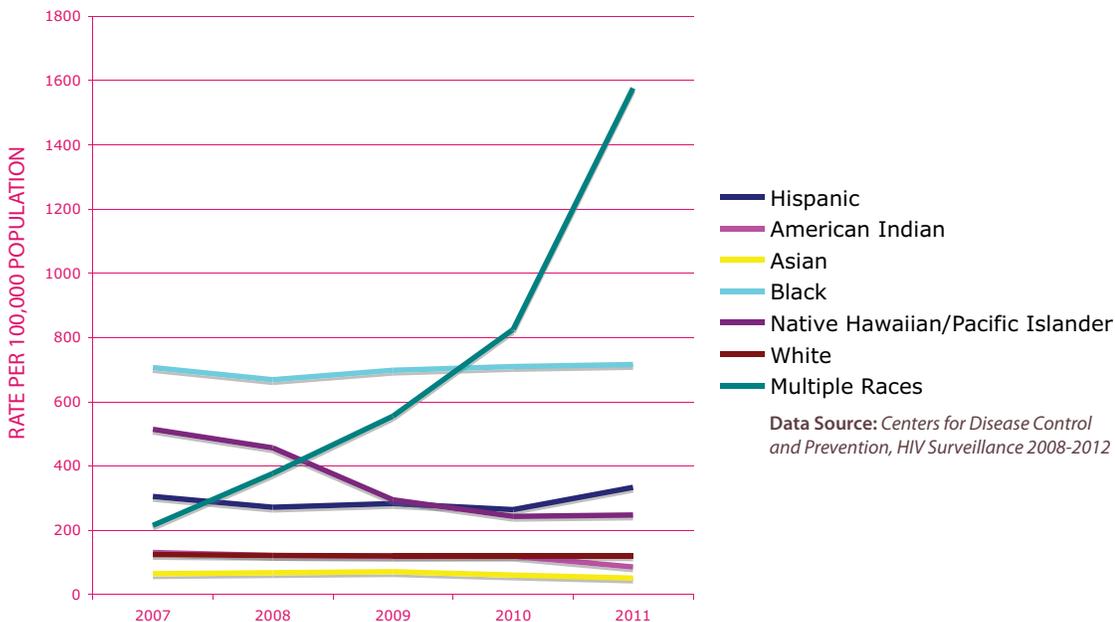


THE GOOD  
THE BAD

76%

PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISpanics WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, Mississippi



MORE THAN HALF OF HISpanics GET NO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



3 OUT OF 5 HISpanics HAVE NOT ACCESSED DENTAL CARE IN THE PAST YEAR

# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the Mississippi legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance). With about 454,000 uninsured Mississippians, 50% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>170</sup> As of February 2014, 56,000 Latinos in the state were eligible and 27.8% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (16,000).<sup>171</sup> Two organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance – Oak Hill Missionary Baptist Church Ministries and University of Mississippi Medical Center.



MISSISSIPPI OPTED OUT OF EXPANDING MEDICAID

# Immigration Law

One of the main institutional threats to immigrant rights in Mississippi was HB 488 of 2012. With some of the same overall flavor of the notorious Arizona bill, HB 488 proposed local law enforcement to determine immigration status for those of “reasonable suspicion,” requiring schools report immigration status of their students, and limiting access to identification such as library cards.<sup>172</sup> Although the bill never passed the Senate, these threats create a climate of fear, for both undocumented and documented individuals. With several of the largest ICE raids and arrests in the country, one Mississippi woman stated that *“as a citizen you don’t have to carry around papers with you, but apparently you should if you’re Hispanic.”*



NUMBER OF LATINOS ELIGIBLE FOR SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE VIA MEDICAID/CHIP OR TAX CREDITS

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>173</sup> As of 2013, all 82 counties in Mississippi participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>174</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>175</sup> The direct association of “security” with “immigration status” further promotes the idea that communities with expanding Latino populations are somehow less safe.



PROPOSED BILL HB 488 INTENDED TO DETERMINE IMMIGRATION STATUS OF THOSE OF “REASONABLE SUSPICION”

The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>176</sup> Similar to Louisiana and Tennessee, as of 2014 there are no counties in Mississippi that are in the 297(g) program. Most immigrant rights groups are against the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs citing multiple reasons including that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources and does not impact violent crime rates.<sup>177</sup>

LOUISIANA



MISSISSIPPI DOES NOT HAVE AN IMMIGRATION COURT; FOR THIS REASON, DEPORTATION PROCEEDINGS ARE DONE IN LOUISIANA

An additional legal complication is that Mississippi does not itself have an immigration court and those who go through deportation proceedings are forced to do so in neighboring Louisiana.<sup>178</sup> This is obviously challenging for family members of those enmeshed in the system, not only to find where the person is being held, but also to be able to visit and help navigate that system.

# Environmental Climate

Many Latinos arrived in Mississippi in the wake of a major disaster – Hurricane Katrina. The story of the emerging local Latino community has roots in both “push” and “pull” factors. One interviewee described “push” factors for Latino immigrants in Mississippi as such: “The reality is that there’s a lot of violence in Mexico. There was a person who had a U.S. residency [meaning in the U.S. legally] and they took his truck and money in Mexico. They come here because they think this is the American dream, but its culture shock and its very different. This is a better life no matter which way you look at it.”

In addition to hardship in their home countries (or other states as some described), those already in the Gulf Coast experienced the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina firsthand; with this catastrophe there was an urgent need for workers to rebuild the coast. One Latina in Biloxi stated: *“After Katrina, this population [Latinos] increased because they [the state] bring people from Latin America to repair and build this area, and they came here with a work visa.”* Another woman in the gulf area gave great credit to Latinos. “[The] Latino population came to help with reconstruction. If it wasn’t for them, Biloxi wouldn’t be what it is today.”

Many individuals don’t understand that Latinos came to assist in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and finding an initially welcoming reception, opted to stay. Male workers brought their wives and children. One Latina describes the changes: “I was in Mississippi when Katrina hit; before that, the Latin population was very small. We all knew each other. We went to the same places. It was very close knit. I came back three weeks after Katrina and it was unbelievable the change, I heard Spanish everywhere. When they were rebuilding, people were so nice and thanked them [Latinos], but a few years later they turned their back on them, looked down on you, told you to go back home. They were not needed so much. They were not welcomed.” This sentiment was echoed across many interviewees in the gulf area. Now, local Latino communities have expanded across the state and tend to live in areas with certain industries, such as poultry, construction and agriculture.

As Latinos were making Mississippi their home post-Katrina, the economic recession of 2008 hit. Across the South, many interviewees identified this economic strain as having a direct impact on how the larger communities viewed Latinos, documented or not. One interviewee said, *“With the economy struggling, there’s a feeling that anyone who is different took your job.”* What comes with this defined economic space is a sense of hierarchy, of who deserves which jobs. The interviewee continued, “the jobs are there for anyone but you will see most of the housekeepers in the casinos are Latinos. Nobody wants those jobs. And you see a lot of abuse in the jobs too.”

Part of the communal challenge for an emerging population is culture shock among the “receiving community,” particularly around language. One Latina woman described her experience getting a driver’s license: *“I know I speak with an accent, but I understand everyone when they talk to me. I didn’t feel bad for me, I felt so sorry for the person at the DMV doing that.”* Even for many well-intentioned non-Hispanics, there is some level of culture shock and a recognition of a cultural gap to bridge. “Promoting in our community [African American] we do a good job, so they know the services, but I don’t know what it will take [to reach Latinos], we really do try to cater to them.”



POST KATRINA, THE NEED FOR REPAIRS SAW AN INFLUX OF HISPANICS TO THE GULF COAST; MANY OF THEM SETTLED PERMANENTLY



WHEN HISPANICS WERE REBUILDING, THEY WERE APPRECIATED; YEARS LATER, WHEN WORK WAS NOT NEEDED, THEY WERE NOT WELCOMED



WITH THE ECONOMY STRUGGLING AND LIMITED JOBS, HISPANICS WERE SEEN AS COMPETITORS



**“The jobs are there for anyone but you will see most of the housekeepers in the casinos are Latinos. Nobody wants those jobs...”**

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE SPEAKING ON JOB DEMAND

# Tactics and Successes

As Latinos increasingly settle in, health care organizations, the health department and community based organizations are making efforts to create programs that serve the local Latino community; of particular importance is patient-provider communication. One concern among interviewees was having high-quality translation, provided by a trained translator, rather than one's child for instance (frequently children in immigrant families are the most culturally conversant and fluent). Even with the best of intentions, miscommunication happens; *“He speaks a little English—that I think is worse because the people think that he can understand in English and then there is just a lot of miscommunication and that is really damaging.”*

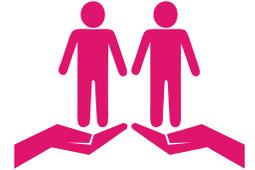
Local institutions recognized the importance of language barriers to promoting health. A few years ago, the health department made a “significant investment” in the Office of Health Disparities and one of their first activities was to train medical interpreters, reportedly 25 across the state. Providers in several hospitals made note of this effort: “The Health department has made significant progress at least in making sure that all the districts have translators.”

Other strategies are also being tested in Mississippi; from the Medical Mall renovation which is now a “one stop shop with ambulatory center” to the new Open Arms clinic which focuses specifically on gay and bisexual men of color, an example of creating a “safe space” for communities that experience a high level of stigma. With new strategies often come dedicated health workers that are making plans for the future. *“We will then see how to advertise so they know they can talk to a doctor in Spanish, and so we can help them to do the labs they need to do,”* said a Latina medical provider in the state.

In addition to the health sector, Mississippian survey respondents highly rated communities of faith as key allies for the local Latino community, higher than in any other state, in fact. Throughout the interviews, Mississippians described specific churches and church leaders' efforts to reach out and integrate with the local Latino community, providing immigration assistance, education, employment and health services.



THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TRAINED 25 MEDICAL INTERPRETERS TO ADDRESS THE LANGUAGE BARRIERS



MEDICAL FACILITIES THAT SERVE SPECIFIC POPULATIONS, SUCH AS GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN OF COLOR, HAVE OPENED



COMMUNITIES OF FAITH HAVE BECOME ALLIES OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITIES AND OFFER MANY SERVICES FOR THEM

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN MISSISSIPPI

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“I think many people don’t use healthcare because they are afraid they will be reported. The first thing I do now is tell them that they are my patients, they are under my care, and if they have any issues they call me. County jails don’t want to take care of cost for medical. They keep a letter in their pockets saying they are my patient.”

—LATINO

## ON IMMIGRATION LAWS

“SE HAN HECHO PROPUESTAS COPIADO DE ALABAMA Y ARIZONA. AFORTUNADAMENTE ESTE AÑO ESTA MAS TRANQUILOS Y QUIEREN PASAR UNA LEY PARA QUE ESTUDIANTES DACA ESTUDIEN.”

—LATINO

“HE LOOKED AT ME AND SAID PLEASE HELP ME. YOU’VE BEEN COMING 7 MONTHS. HE SAID PLEASE TELL ME DO I HAVE HIV? I SAID NO YOU’RE NOT POSITIVE, BUT HE NEEDED TO HEAR IT IN SPANISH”

—LATINA

“Part of this is in Mississippi, the fact that the Latino population is migrant workers living here for a short period of time. All that together means it’s not really a Latino voice, versus North Carolina or in the Northeast; in the South people are still moving depending on where job opportunities are.”

—LATINO

# NORTH CAROLINA

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

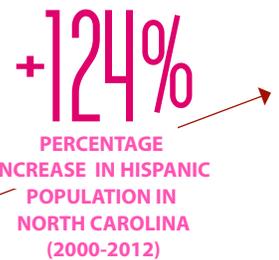
North Carolina has the nation's seventh fastest growing Hispanic population, increasing by 124.2% between 2000 and 2012.<sup>179</sup> The average age of Latinos, is 24 years, with 39% under 18 years of age.<sup>180</sup> Fifty-three percent of the Hispanic population in North Carolina was born in the U.S., and 19% speak only English at home.<sup>181</sup> The majority of Hispanics in North Carolina are of Mexican descent or origin (58%), followed by Central American (18%) and Caribbean (15%).<sup>182</sup> Approximately 214,000 Hispanics in North Carolina are eligible to vote.<sup>183</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent of Hispanic population were Duplin, Lee, Sampson, Greene and Montgomery.<sup>184</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>185</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics is \$17,200, compared to \$30,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$22,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks. Among Latinos in North Carolina, 30% of adults and 44% of children under 18 years are living in poverty.<sup>186</sup>



AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN NORTH CAROLINA

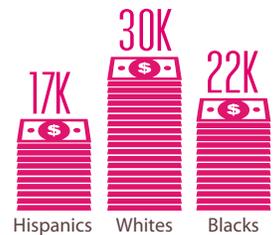
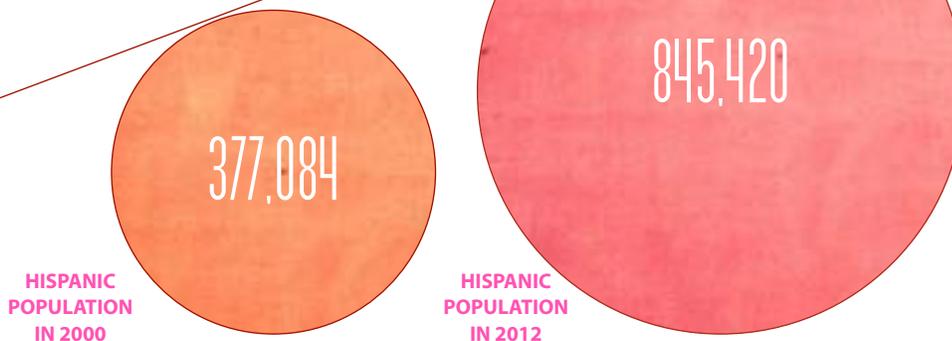


HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

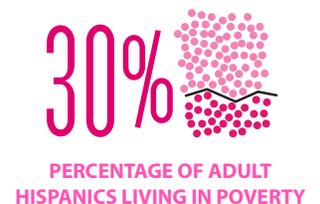


PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN NORTH CAROLINA (2000-2012)

### Hispanic Population Change in North Carolina, 2000-2012<sup>187</sup>



MEDIAN INCOME



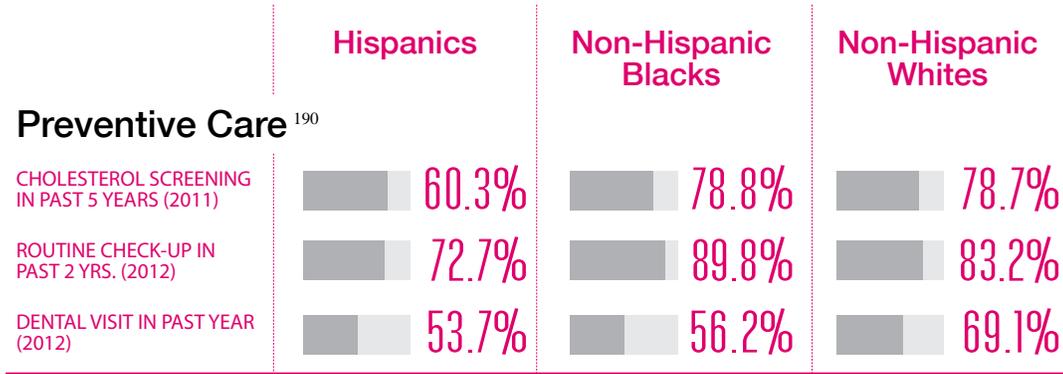
PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY

# Key Health Indicators

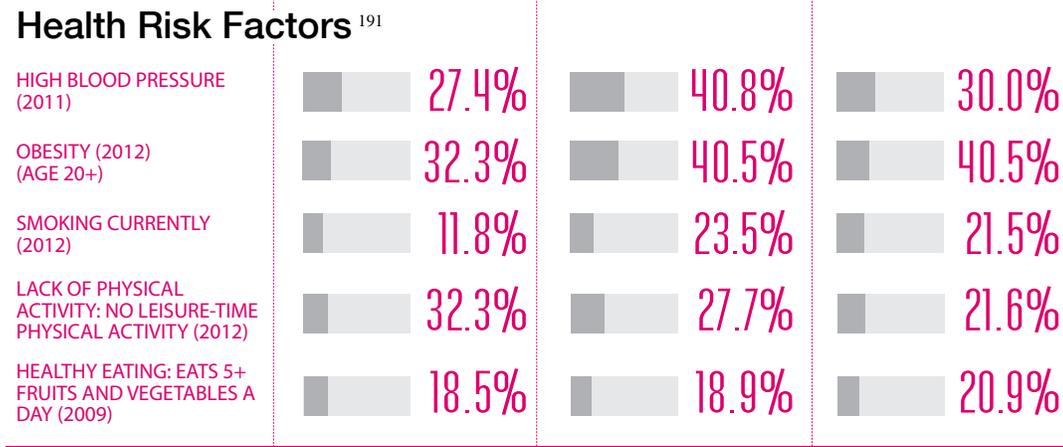
As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 43% of Latinos in North Carolina do not have health insurance (18% U.S. born and 71% foreign-born).<sup>188</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (12%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (19%).<sup>189</sup>



**HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**



**HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVELS OF SMOKING**

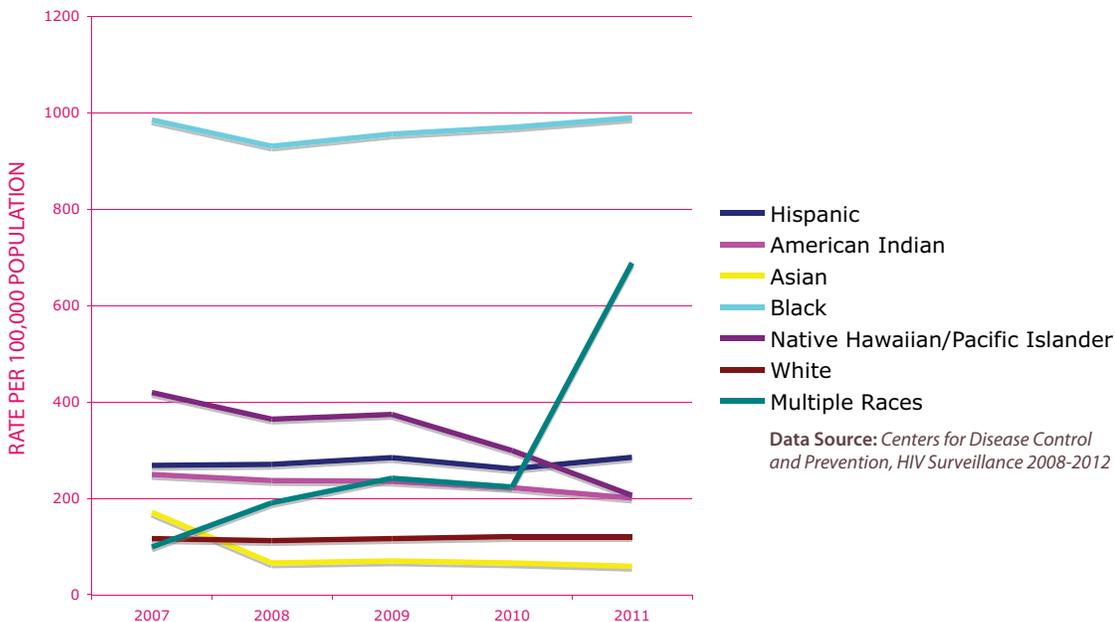


**THE GOOD  
THE BAD**

**71%**

**PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE**

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, North Carolina



**HISPANICS GET THE LEAST PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**



**HISPANICS GET THE LEAST PREVENTATIVE CARE SERVICE**

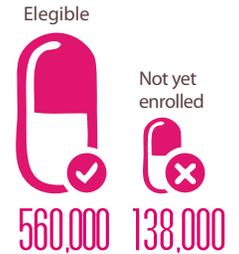
# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the North Carolina legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance). With about 1.6 million uninsured North Carolinians, 42% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>192</sup> As of February 2014, there were 560,000 Latinos in the state who were eligible and 24.7% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (138,000).<sup>193</sup> Four organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance – Randolph Hospital, Mountain Projects, North Carolina Community Care Networks, and the Alcohol/Drug Council of NC.<sup>194</sup>



# Immigration Law

One of the main institutional policy threats to immigrant rights in North Carolina was the “Reclaim NC Act” or HB 786 of 2013.<sup>195</sup> With some of the same overall flavor of the notorious Arizona bill, the Reclaim NC Act utilized a “carrot and stick” approach, which provided immigrants a driving privilege while at the same time bringing about stricter enforcement, harsher penalties and an open door for racial profiling.<sup>196</sup> After fierce resistance from immigrant rights groups and concern about the impact on the state’s economy, the bill was vetoed by the governor who again recommended conducting a study on how the law would impact North Carolinians.<sup>197</sup> Although the bill never passed, some have argued that these threats create a climate of fear, for both undocumented and documented individuals; interviews in North Carolina clearly described a negatively charged environment post-Reclaim NC Act.



**NUMBER OF LATINOS ELIGIBLE FOR SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE VIA MEDICAID/CHIP OR TAX CREDITS**

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>198</sup> As of 2013, all 100 counties in North Carolina participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>199</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>200</sup>



The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>201</sup> North Carolina has more counties participating in the program than any other state in the US. As of February 2014, five counties in North Carolina had agreements with ICE to serve as participating entities in the 287(g) program – Cabarrus, Gaston, Henderson, Mecklenburg and Wake counties – counties with high populations of Latinos. Most immigrant rights groups are against the 287(g) program citing multiple reasons including that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources and does not impact finding violent criminals.<sup>202</sup>



An additional factor to consider is that North Carolina immigration courts also handle cases from South Carolina; that said, the number of deportations for immigration violations has increased steadily since 2011, increasing by 41% between 2013-2014 (from 2,195 to 3,099, respectively). The North Carolina court system has the eighth highest number of deportations in the country, the second highest in the South (following Georgia).<sup>203</sup>

# Environmental Climate

There is intense focus on drivers' licenses in North Carolina as a key barrier to local Latino communities. As of February 2014, North Carolina has the most 287(g) counties in all the U.S.; debates on all sides of immigration reform often mention road safety and drivers' licenses as an important consideration. As with other states, North Carolina exhibits varied microclimates of sentiment toward immigrants.

A key example of just such an extremely hostile microclimate is evidenced by a recent lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against the Alamance County Sheriff's Office, alleging that the sheriff ordered officers to bring Latinos to jail who were stopped for traffic violations, rather than giving them a citation. The judgment summary also noted that a captain in this office sent his subordinates a link to a game where the premise was to shoot "stereotypical Mexicans" (including pregnant women and children) as they tried to cross the border.<sup>204</sup> As a result, the federal government pulled their 287(g) contract with the county.<sup>205</sup>

The uneven and highly localized sentiment towards Latinos makes choice of where to settle a difficult exercise with potentially severe impact on one's day-to-day life. Interviewees described places where there is intense institutionalized stigma and scrutiny, such as regular roadblocks where law enforcement officials check for identification, whereas in other areas the local government is working to create solutions and options for valid identification.

At the local level, individual cities are often coming up with their own solutions when the state government does not provide a satisfactory option. For instance, one Latina interviewee described there being "serious talk" in Charlotte about providing city-issued or consulate-issued identification cards, which she reports was done in other cities. In 2010, the Durham city council agreed that government officials can accept Mexican consulate identification. On a smaller scale, one interviewee described the impact of not having a drivers' license on health programs. *"Many interventions we offer around HIV and prevention, we give rides to folks. People take a risk to drive to work, but are not willing a risk to drive to do something health-related... if you're ineligible for drivers' license, why on earth would you drive unless you have to?"*

These highly electrified environments centering around immigration issues are significantly impacting people's day-to-day lives. Interviewees reported that fear of being asked to see identification has led to delays getting to the doctor for pregnancy check-ups, delays in kids getting to clinics, not calling the police to report crimes, and disengagement from school-life. It's simply too risky.

At the same time, the local Latino communities in North Carolina are deepening their roots and strengthening networks. Many interviewees in North Carolina easily identified leaders in the community that are pushing for rights, reform and recognition. *"I see Latino leadership emerge... and that is helping guide the way for a population that is not necessarily accepted,"* said a long-time advocate in the Triangle area.



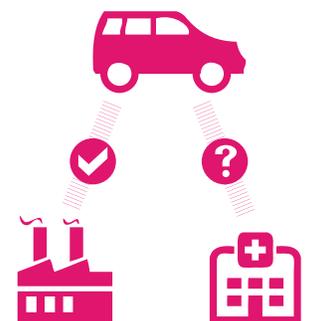
RECENTLY A LAWSUIT WAS FILED AGAINST A SHERIFF WHO ORDERED LATINOS JAILED FOR TRAFFIC OFFENSES INSTEAD OF HANDING OUT CITATIONS



SOME CITIES ARE DISCUSSING THE POSSIBILITY OF ISSUING CITY IDENTIFICATION CARDS



SOME PLACES HAVE STRONG SCRUTINY TOWARDS LATINOS; WHILE OTHERS HAVE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT WORK TO CREATE SOLUTIONS



HISPANICS ARE WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK TO DRIVE TO WORK BUT ARE RESISTANT TO DRIVE FOR HEALTH CARE NEEDS

## Tactics & Successes

Local Latino communities in North Carolina are developing an array of tactics to raise visibility and exert control over issues important to the community - economic leverage and empowerment being key. One interviewee described the environmental climate as shaping the coping tactics that Latinos are using – self-empowerment. *“In the South, it feels like the folks we’ve encountered there are a lot more self-reliant. There aren’t any resources around them so they are having to go out and make it happen... It’s that sort of thing, a lot of communities realizing that they will have to make their own change and working together to do that.”*

With empowerment comes responsibility. More so than other states, Hispanic interviewees shared the need to hold their communities accountable – pushing local Latino communities and individuals to “pull their weight.” One Latino man stated, *“a good thing is [that] we have more Latinos in government positions; we are more organized and try to push our community. [This is] not new, there are many Latino centers across the state and better communication among Latino leaders across the state.”* Another Hispanic man pushed the proposed envelope even further: *“We need to better support Hispanic businesses. Hispanics need to take more responsibility for getting educated, need to learn English and need to get better education in accounting, finance... [and understand] municipal issues - ‘why do I have to abide by these rules?’”* There is a sense in the local Latino communities of a sharing of tactics such as networking, documenting professional achievements, and helping translate for monolingual Spanish speakers.

Some of those in the survey identified banks and credit unions as key allies for the Latino community. Interviewees described particular tactics that these businesses are using to bring in Latino customers, such as flexibility in documentation and bilingual-bicultural employees. And while banks are benefitting from this relationships, interviewees see the community benefitting as well. The opportunity to have a bank account can significantly reduce the risk and stress of carrying around cash and increases economic power, as well as representing an investment in the future

*“An entrepreneurship boom,”* as one Latina called it, appears to be underway. Across the state, interviewees described a growth in small business catering to the local Latino population. *“Very mom and pop, catering to natives.”* This extends to markets with specialty products, phone services, money wiring services, document translation, and income tax information, particularly services that are often necessities focusing in the immediate, day-to-day lives of Latinos.



LATINOS ARE BECOMING MORE EMPOWERED TO GET INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ISSUES, GAIN ECONOMIC LEVERAGE AND RAISE VISIBILITY



**“A good thing is [that] we have more Latinos in government positions; we are more organized and try to push our community.”**

INTERVIEWEE ON THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



A BOOM OF HISPANIC BUSINESSES THAT TARGET HISPANICS HAS EMERGED ACROSS THE STATE

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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“Lo que yo veo en el área a donde nosotros estamos es que la mayoría lo veo como algo interesante en cuanto a diversidad, y diversidad pero no solamente, claro las personas que venden, la cultura, la comida aquí de todas las personas de esta área. Aquí veo a veces un poquito de resistencia de la comunidad americana porque es lo que siempre vemos no, el estigma de que están llegando aquí para quitarnos los recursos y los trabajos.”

—LATINA

## ON TRUSTING THE SYSTEM

“OUTREACH WORKERS STILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND TRY TO GET THEM INTO THE CLINIC. DOESN'T MEAN THAT THEY COME. I THINK THEY TRUST THE OUTREACH WORKERS BUT JUST DON'T TRUST THE SYSTEM.”

—LATINA

“TWENTY YEARS OF HAVING LATINO PEOPLE IN NORTH CAROLINA AND WE'RE STILL SAYING ITS EMERGENT.” —LATINO

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“I think people who come here from various areas face a difficult challenge in the South – I'm glad they're still coming because it shows we're hard-headed but it also shows that we face the adversity for a benefit to our families and make better lives and better opportunities.” —LATINO

# SOUTH CAROLINA

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

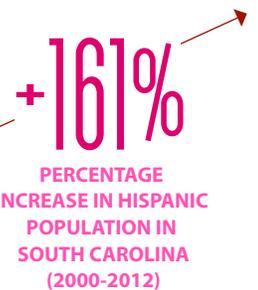
South Carolina has the nation's second fastest growing Hispanic population, increasing by 161.3% between 2000 and 2012.<sup>206</sup> The average age is 25 years, with 35% under 18 years of age.<sup>207</sup> Fifty-six percent of the Hispanic population in South Carolina was born in the U.S., and 28% speak only English at home.<sup>208</sup> The majority of Hispanics in South Carolina are of Mexican descent or origin (57%), followed by Caribbean (18%), Central American (11%), South American (9%), and "other Hispanic" (5%).<sup>209</sup> Approximately 82,000 Hispanics in South Carolina are eligible to vote.<sup>210</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent Hispanic population were Jasper, Saluda, Beaufort, Greenville and Newberry.<sup>211</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>212</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics is \$19,200, compared to \$30,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$20,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks. Among Latinos in South Carolina, 27% of adults and 41% of children under 18 years are living in poverty.<sup>213</sup>



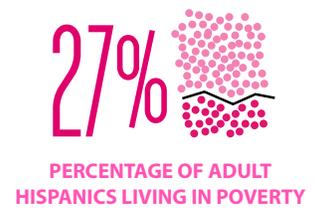
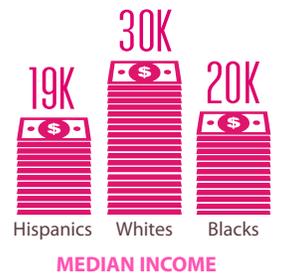
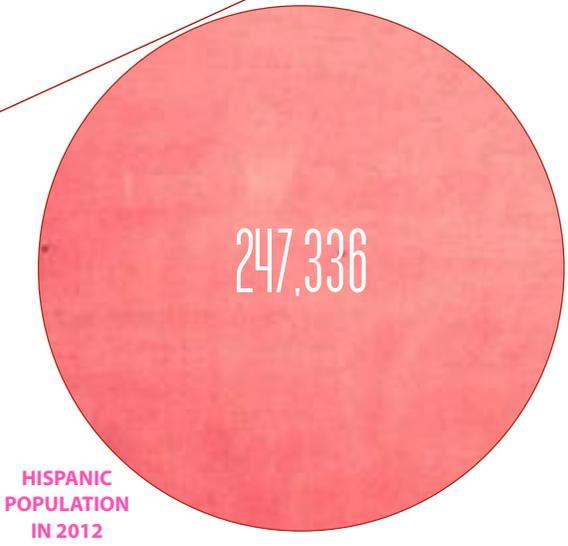
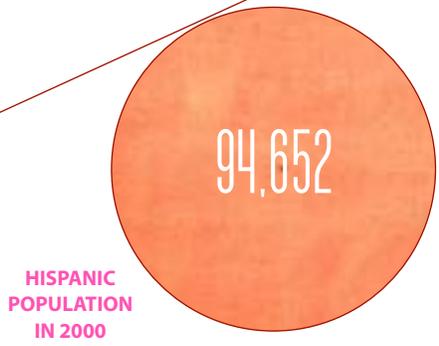
**AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN SOUTH CAROLINA**



**HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION**



### Hispanic Population Change in South Carolina, 2000-2012<sup>214</sup>

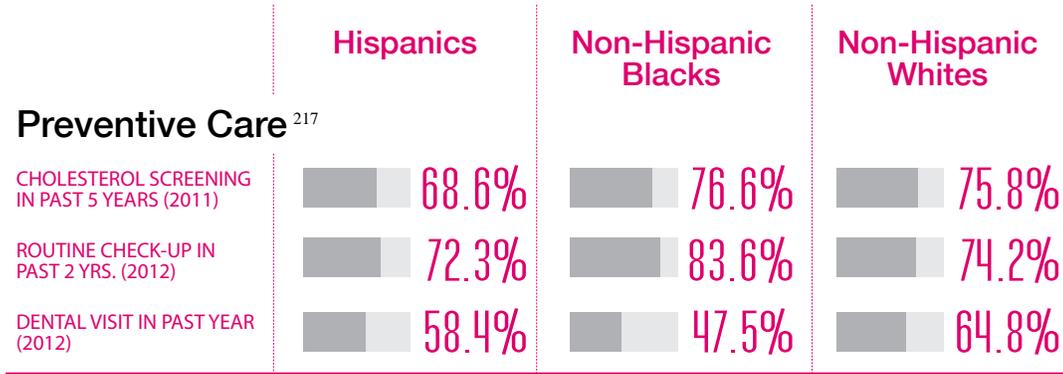


# Key Health Indicators

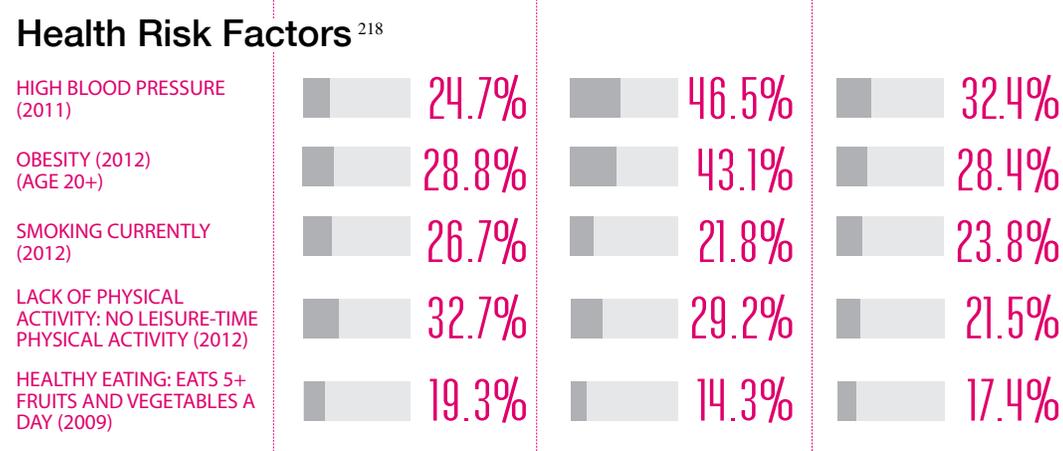
As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 41% of Latinos in South Carolina do not have health insurance (19% U.S. born and 69% foreign-born).<sup>215</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (13%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (20%).<sup>216</sup>



**HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVEL OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**



**HISPANICS EAT THE MOST HEALTHY FOODS**

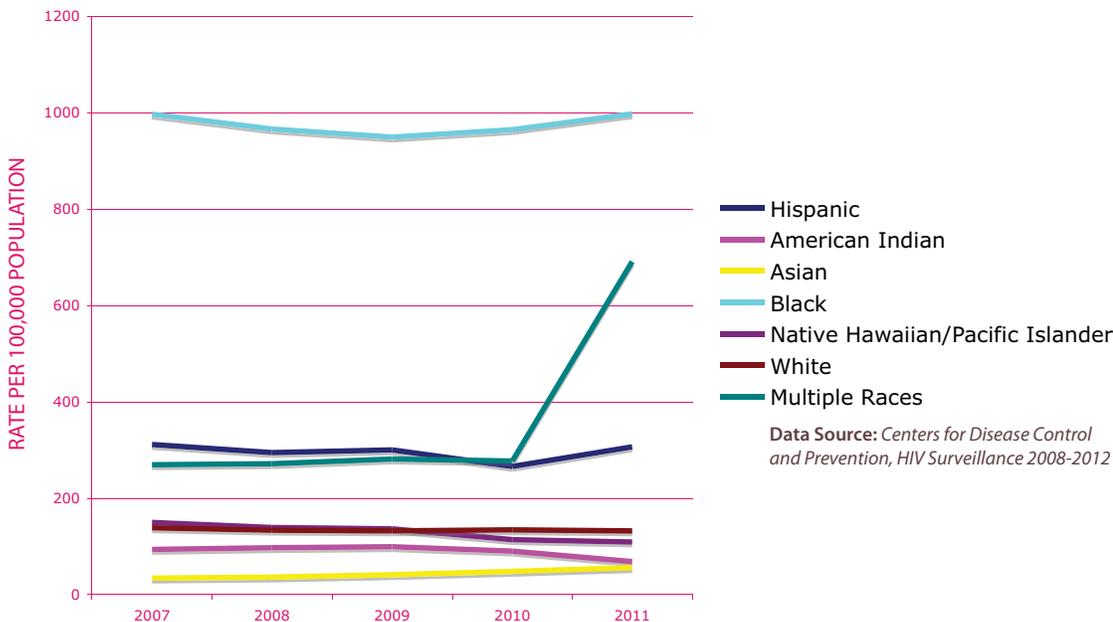


**THE GOOD  
THE BAD**

**69%**

**PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE**

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, South Carolina



**HISPANICS HAVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF SMOKING**



**HISPANICS RECEIVE THE LEAST PREVENTATIVE CARE SERVICES**

# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” the South Carolina legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance). With about 765,000 uninsured South Carolinians, 49% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children, as the state offers very limited resources for adults (parents or otherwise).<sup>219</sup> As of February 2014, 163,000 Latinos in the state were eligible and 26.5% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (43,000).<sup>220</sup> Two organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance – DECO Recovery Management and Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce.<sup>221</sup>



# Immigration Law

Over the past several years, South Carolina has experienced strong legal and political climates of anti-immigrant sentiment, as evidenced by the introduction and passing of several key bills, such as SB 20’s passage in 2011.<sup>222</sup> Many have argued that these types of bills create a climate of fear for both undocumented and documented individuals; interviews in South Carolina clearly described a continuing state of fear. Among the wide-range of provisions, SB 20 made it legal for law enforcement officers to arrest individuals who did not carry documentation papers with them, required officers to check status on routine stops, and instituted E-verify which requires employers to check new and current employee citizenship status.<sup>223</sup> In late 2011, a federal court blocked major parts of the law,<sup>224</sup> and as of March 2014, many provisions of the law were permanently blocked, including provisions that criminalize interactions with undocumented immigrants, such as providing transportation. The ruling also provided strict guidance around law enforcement officers holding individuals to check immigration status.<sup>225</sup>



**NUMBER OF LATINOS ELIGIBLE FOR SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE VIA MEDICAID/CHIP OR TAX CREDITS**

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>226</sup> As of 2013, all 46 counties in South Carolina participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>227</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>228</sup>



**287(G) IS ACTIVE IN 3 COUNTIES WITH LARGE LATINO POPULATIONS: CHARLESTON, LEXINGTON AND YORK**

The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>229</sup> As of February 2014, three counties in South Carolina had agreements with ICE to serve as participating entities in the 287(g) program – Charleston, Lexington and York counties – counties with Latino populations between 10,000-20,000.<sup>230</sup> Most immigrant rights groups are against the 287(g) program citing multiple reasons including that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources and does not impact finding violent criminals.<sup>231</sup>



**SINCE SOUTH CAROLINA DOES NOT HAVE AN IMMIGRATION COURT, DEPORTATION CASES ARE HANDLED IN NORTH CAROLINA; ADDING STRESS TO THOSE AFFECTED FAMILIES**

South Carolina does not have an immigration court and those who go through deportation proceedings do so in North Carolina.<sup>232</sup> This is challenging for family members not only to find where the person is being held, but also to be able to visit and help navigate that system. The family unit is most definitely disrupted.

# Environmental Climate

While much of the SB 20 anti-immigrant law was blocked in 2011 and permanently blocked in 2014, South Carolinians described an ICE presence and fear of deportation very differently across the state. While some described hostile microclimates, others noted that their local communities were distinctive as they did not feel the chilling grip of the law that seemed more pervasive in other South Carolina jurisdictions. Some interviewees described stories they heard from other towns or counties, but noted, *“we don’t see that here”* or *“there aren’t any check points here.”*

Many reported “back in the day” stories of ICE raids and arrests of the local Hispanic community; people were filled with fear and social isolation. One Latina in Rock Hill described that *“always you would hear ‘ICE is over here’...lots of fear and uncertainty about doing everyday things. In the past year/year and a half, that has calmed down a little.”* There is still a keen sense of the stories of discrimination, fear, and families being separated, husbands arrested and deported, leaving mothers and children behind. Most of those who discussed raids and arrests shared specific stories of people they knew, as well as stories heard through the grapevine.

While some shared stories of the local Latino community leaving based on fear, others described families staying put, albeit remaining isolated; living on the margins. One woman described how some of the local community is both geographically and socially isolated. *“After passage [of SB 20], a lot of folks were really scared and went deeper in the shadows, of not driving and not going anywhere,”* said one interviewee. Not only did people retreat from their public lives, *“the population is [also] covered throughout the county, so [in some areas] there aren’t the huge concentration of people living with each other... There is a huge settlement in Greenville, in Berea, but besides there, they are mostly in trailer parks and in isolation,”* described another interviewee. We mustn’t forget, as interviewees reminded us, that individuals who are isolated or living in fear of leaving their homes may not access necessary health care. *“There was a [migrant] couple who was pregnant and HIV positive, and he would not let her come in with the fear of being involved in the system,”* described two healthcare workers. Sadly, this situation of living in the margins is layered over the overall poor southern transportation infrastructure.

Recently however, there is a strong sense of things turning around - those that left seem to be coming back and there is a general recognition of an improving quality of life for the local Hispanic community. On Hilton Head, a resort area on the coast, one health worker noted that the *“migrant and agricultural workers have become very stable with grown up kids and educated kids; parents are also becoming more educated.”* Interviewees described families settling, things “quieting down,” and even described particular individuals in law enforcement that go out of their way to help the local Latino community. Not that there aren’t still tensions, but the general feeling seems to tend towards the opinion that circumstances are improving.

# Tactics & Successes

South Carolinians evoked a great sense of pride in the interviews. From those who have been working in the community for over 20 years, to those who only started six months ago, many interviewees spoke highly of their organization’s ability to meet the needs of the local Latino community. *“A lot of folks come back to this clinic. The clinic has done a great job to accommodate clients, for example having a migrant clinic at night.”* Some



ALMOST EVERYONE KNOWS OF A RELATIVE OR SOMEONE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHO HAS BEEN DEPORTED AND SEPARATED FROM HIS/HER FAMILY



MANY FAMILIES, SCARED OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, HAVE OPTED FOR KEEPING THEMSELVES IN THE SHADOWS



**“There is a huge settlement in Greenville, in Berea, but besides there, they are mostly in trailer parks and in isolation.”**

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE ON HOW LATINOS RETREAT FROM PUBLIC LIVES

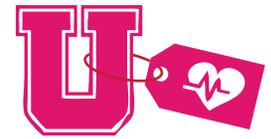


COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED CREATIVE WAYS TO REACH CLIENTS SUCH AS MIGRANT CLINICS THAT WORK AT NIGHT

took pride in their own dedication in creating programs and services, while others were proud that their agencies hire a lot of minorities and Hispanics.

Unique across the Deep South region, South Carolinians, in the survey and interviews, noted universities as key allies for the local Latino community. *PASOs*, a community based organization hosted at the University of South Carolina, came up among nearly a third of all those interviewed. Interviewees shared that certain aspects of the program were most beneficial to the local Latino communities, this included bilingual services, interpreters, sliding scale fees, and being flexible in what kind of documents are required. Additionally, the program utilizes a *promotora* model and trains community leaders across the state on different topics that are pertinent to the local community, such as immigrant rights, breast-feeding, and healthy relationships. Such a program addresses the Latino hierarchy of needs.

Another key university ally in the state is the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), or *El MUSC* as community members call it. One interviewee described a diverse student population with a very strong core of Hispanic students that advocate and do community health fair work. Another interviewee stated that they have about two health fairs per month, many in migrant camps. Health fairs are a common mechanism used to meet the needs of the local Latino community, but there is still a clear need for a more sustained and sustainable infrastructure. In addition to direct service, one interviewee shared that university partners played an important role in his organization, helping with field research and report writing. He partly credits this effort of pulling all the data together as a tipping point for opening four new seats on the HIV Council specifically for Hispanics – ***“So the health department’s HIV council had no representative seats for Hispanics; finally three years ago after busting our asses, we got four seats.”***



UNIVERSITIES HAVE BECOME ALLIES TO THE LATINO COMMUNITY AS THEY OFFER HEALTH CARE AND FAMILY SERVICES



LATINOS ARE SLOWLY GAINING REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL BODIES SUCH AS THE HIV COUNCIL OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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“When we are talking about a large population that are undocumented I don’t see anything in terms of health care solutions, it is with hand and hand with immigration reform and I am not too optimistic on the provisions of the immigration reform to provide coverage.” —LATINA

## ON THINGS GETTING BETTER

“ALWAYS YOU WOULD HEAR ‘ICE IS OVER HERE’.. LOTS OF FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT DOING EVERYDAY THINGS. IN THE PAST YEAR/YEAR AND A HALF, THAT HAS CALMED DOWN A LITTLE.” —LATINA

“I USED TO FEEL LIKE THE UNITED NATIONS --ANYONE WHO DIDN’T SPEAK ENGLISH THEY SENT THEM TO ME.” —LATINO

“When we are talking about a large population that are undocumented I don’t see anything in terms of health care solutions, it is with hand and hand with immigration reform and I am not too optimistic on the provisions of the immigration reform to provide coverage.” —LATINA

# TENNESSEE

## Hispanic Population Characteristics

Tennessee has the nation's fastest growing Hispanic population, increasing by 162.8% between 2000 and 2012.<sup>233</sup> The Latino average age is 24 years, with 37% under 18 years of age.<sup>234</sup> Fifty-four percent of the Hispanic population in Tennessee was born in the U.S., and 25% speak only English at home.<sup>235</sup> The majority of Hispanics in Tennessee are of Mexican descent or origin (64%), followed by Central American (17%), and Caribbean (11%), South American (4%), and "other Hispanic" (4%).<sup>236</sup> Approximately 98,000 Hispanics in Tennessee are eligible to vote.<sup>237</sup> Across the state, the counties with the largest percent Hispanic population are Bedford, Hamblen, Davidson, Crockett and Warren.<sup>238</sup> The top industries that employ Hispanics are construction, agriculture and mining; manufacturing, trade and transportation; and information and finance.<sup>239</sup> The median personal earnings for Hispanics is \$16,000, compared to \$27,800 for non-Hispanic Whites and \$22,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks. Among Latinos in Tennessee, 28% of adults and 40% of children under 18 years are living in poverty.<sup>240</sup>



**AVERAGE AGE OF HISPANICS LIVING IN TENNESSEE**

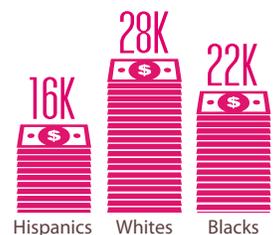
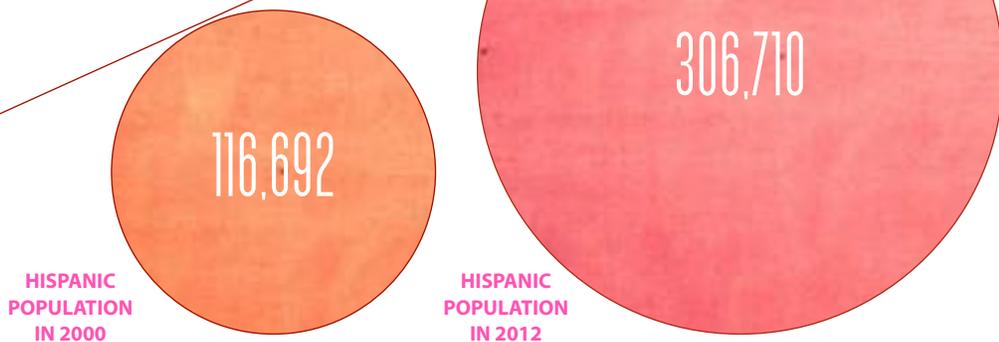


**HISPANICS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION**



**PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HISPANIC POPULATION IN TENNESSEE (2000-2012)**

### Hispanic Population Change in Tennessee, 2000-2012<sup>241</sup>



**MEDIAN INCOME**



**PERCENTAGE OF ADULT HISPANICS LIVING IN POVERTY**

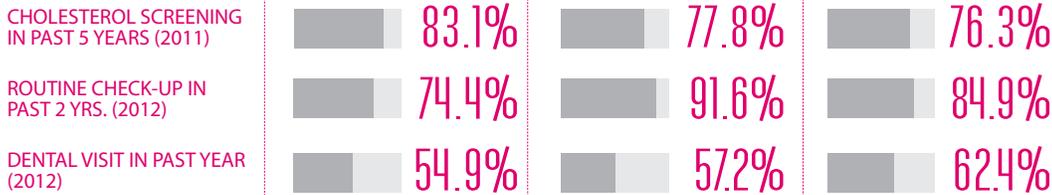
# Key Health Indicators

As health insurance in the U.S. serves as a key that unlocks the doors of healthcare, it stands to reason that improved health outcomes can be found when more people are insured; that being said, 43% of Latinos in Tennessee do not have health insurance (15% of Hispanics born in the U.S. and 76% those foreign-born).<sup>242</sup> Compare this to the rate of uninsured among non-Hispanic Whites (13%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (18%).<sup>243</sup>



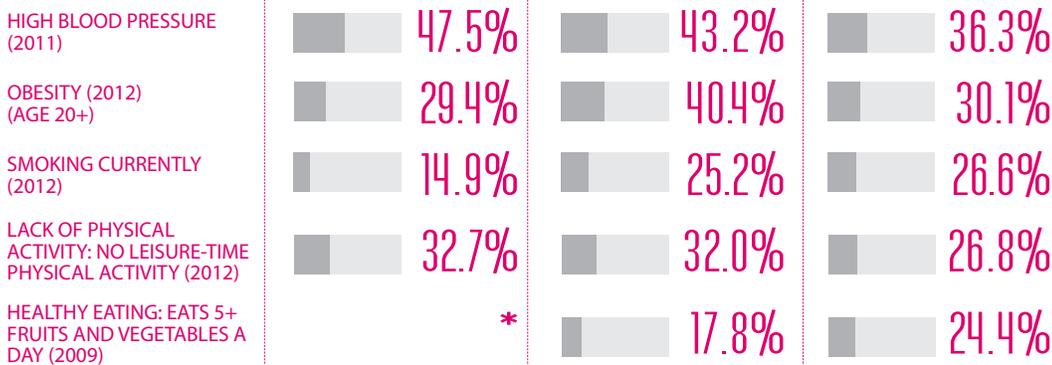
**HISPANICS HAVE THE HIGHEST RATE OF CHOLESTEROL SCREENING**

## Preventive Care <sup>244</sup>



**HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST LEVELS OF SMOKING**

## Health Risk Factors <sup>245</sup>



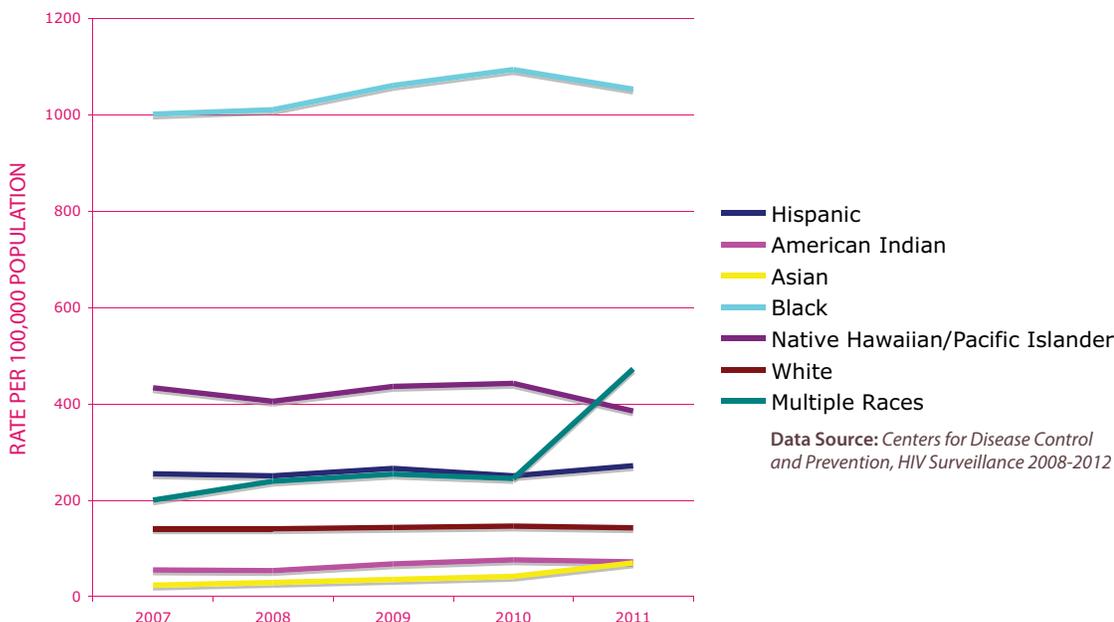
\* Figure does not meet standard of reliability or precision



**76%**

**PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN HISPANICS WHO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE**

## Adults & Adolescents Diagnosed with HIV by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2011, Tennessee



**HISPANICS HAVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**



**HISPANICS HAVE THE LOWEST RATES OF ROUTINE CHECK UPS AND DENTAL VISITS**

# Health Care Reform

With the Supreme Court’s upholding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare,” Tennessee legislature decided to: 1) not expand Medicaid to include those who make less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$23,850 for family of four) and 2) let the federal government run its health exchange (the online marketplace for insurance). With about 850,000 million uninsured Tennesseans, 52% are eligible for some kind of financial assistance via Medicaid/CHIP or tax credits. Those eligible are primarily children and parents, as the state offers very limited resources for childless adults.<sup>246</sup> As of February 2014, there were 210,000 Latinos in the state who were eligible and 29.6% of those were not yet enrolled in a plan (62,000).<sup>247</sup> Two organizations were awarded federal resources to help facilitate enrollment into insurance - Structured Employment Economic Development Organization (SEEDCO) and the Tennessee Primary Care Association.



# Immigration Law

One institutional policy threat to immigrant rights in Tennessee is SB 170, which was signed into law in 2013. This bill refines the procurement rules and makes it illegal to knowingly utilize services or products of individuals without documentation.<sup>248</sup> While Tennessee communities have not experienced the passing of harsh immigration law such as Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, there is an electrified environment of legislation that could both negatively and positively impact local Latino communities, keeping immigrant rights groups extremely busy. For instance, several other bills came up in 2013 that have been tabled for the current year and include some that could hurt Latino quality of life (e.g. expanding E-verify, defunding refugee resettlement, English only-drivers’ license examinations) as well as to improve the quality of life (e.g. extending in-state tuition rates to certain undocumented students).<sup>249</sup>



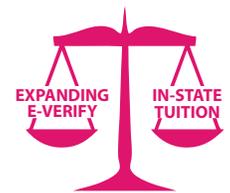
NUMBER OF LATINOS ELIGIBLE FOR SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE VIA MEDICAID/CHIP OR TAX CREDITS

Two other institutional policies that impact the day-to-day lives of Latinos are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” and the 287(g) programs. For “Secure Communities,” fingerprints of those arrested (not necessarily charged) for even low-level crimes are crosschecked with immigration databases.<sup>250</sup> As of 2013, all 95 counties in Tennessee participate in the Secure Communities program.<sup>251</sup> In November 2014, President Obama announced the end of Secure Communities, replacing it with a program called Priority Enforcement Program, or “PEP.”<sup>252</sup>



SB 170 MAKES IT ILLEGAL TO KNOWINGLY UTILIZE SERVICES WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION

The 287(g) program is a separate ICE program that allows a state or local law enforcement agency to enforce immigration in their jurisdictions.<sup>253</sup> Similar to Louisiana and Mississippi, as of 2014 there are no counties in Tennessee that are in the 287(g) program, although interviewees report that counties have discussed applying. Most immigrant rights groups are against the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs citing multiple reasons including that the program increases racial profiling, drains local policing resources and does not impact finding violent criminals.<sup>254</sup>



SOME IMMIGRATION BILLS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED THE LIVES OF LATINOS WHILE OTHERS BENEFITED THEM

Tennessee immigration court also sees cases from Kentucky; that said, the number of deportations for violation of immigration (not including other criminal charges) peaked in 2006 at 2,073 deportations. Since then, the number has oscillated between a low of 1,219 and a high of 1,848; with 1,530 deportations in 2014.<sup>255</sup>

# Environmental Climate

Tennessee is a bit different from other states in this report. It may not truly be a “Deep South” state in that many argue where exactly it fits in, geographically. Tennessee is in a state of ambivalence. There is a true hesitation about Latinos and other immigrants that is even seen in the legislature where anti-immigrant bills are brought up and not passed, over and over again. In driving through the state, one will find microcosms of Latino life and culture, often mixed in with other immigrant groups. In South Nashville, Nolansville Pike serves as an immigrant corridor and many community groups co-mingle services across a wide array of nationalities and languages.

In the years of anti-immigrant law turmoil in the South, Tennessee served as a legal safe haven for those that were trying to shield themselves from some of the worst enacted institutionalized stigma in the nation. One Latino leader noted, “In Memphis it [the Latino population] has been growing. I hear of other areas... some more racist areas, that there have been anti-immigrant initiatives... people in Alabama have come to Tennessee after the anti-immigration bill.” Others noted that is unclear about how many people actually came. Many described a “brief uptick,” yet are unclear if they moved back, kept coming, or moved on to other states for economic opportunities.

Interviewees presented a very mixed view of how welcoming the state is for Latinos. One man described Tennessee as being “lenient...and well-known for welcoming immigrants, especially at a statewide level,” including town hall meetings, community meetings and resources, such as the Welcoming America program. Even within cities, like Memphis, people described microcosms that were completely welcoming, and others that were hostile and unsafe. In another area of the state, several interviewees believe that the environment is hostile. “[I] don’t think they would think it’s a friendly place because there is nothing in the city that connects to them - not in the schools, health system, etc. - nothing there that lets them know the community wants them there,” stated another interviewee. Tennessee, most-assuredly exemplifies that old adage that “all politics are local” and as such demonstrates that Latinos are indeed living in microclimates with varying conditions and community values.

For those Latinos living in a microcosm of hostility, one Latina described it as such: “I think they really want to settle here, feel welcome, and I don’t know if it’s because of language barrier, [but] they don’t feel there is a lot of discrimination, in their concept they feel really welcome. I would say unless they are heavily involved in a community organization, I don’t think they understand how racist this area is.”

The Latino population in the state is booming and many local Latino communities are settling in. A noted key indicator of progress, by many interviewees, is the presence of Latino media outlets, and Tennessee has many. Megan King, a local photographer describes a dichotomy she sees in the growing population. “Probably what surprises most people who look at this work [her photography], which is how much of a presence the Hispanic community has in Northeast Tennessee, and how it still goes unnoticed.”

With growth and this sense of invisibility, there is a keen need for more visible Latino leaders, especially in the government sector. One government employee noted that the “starting point for most agencies here is Latino Memphis, but they must be stretched thin to be the one organization that addresses issues for Latinos. This is an opportunity for the government to use them, but also find other leaders in the Latino community who can help.” Another interviewee noted that there are grassroots leaders in local Latino communities, but they are not visible to the outside. This is where we need to focus.



TENNESSEE SERVED AS A LEGAL SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE STATES WITH HARSH ANTI-IMMIGRATION BILLS



“[I] don’t think they would think it’s a friendly place because there is nothing in the city that connects to them - not in the schools, health system, ...”

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE ON HOW RECEPTIVE IS THE STATE TOWARDS HISPANICS



LATINOS PRESENCE HAS BEEN GROWING BUT IT IS STILL UNNOTICED IN MAINSTREAM AND GOVERNMENT



HISPANICS DESCRIBED MICROCOSMS THAT ARE VERY WELCOMING WHILE OTHERS ARE SOMEWHAT HOSTILE

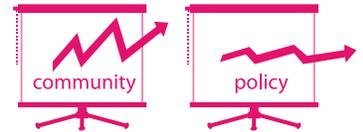
## Tactics & Successes

Interviewees, while they did provide ample evidence of institutional, social and daily challenges Latinos face, largely described life for Latinos as improving or staying the same over the past five years. *“I think community-wise things are improving--- businesses, support organizations that have grown a lot more Latinos in the past couple years, compared to ten years ago, so it’s a more comforting presence. Policy-wise has been pretty status-quo, not too many pro-immigrant changes here,”* said a Latino Tennessean.

Another indicator of progress, as noted by the interviewees, is increased hiring of bilingual individuals. *“Within the past five years have seen a big increase in more bilingual people hired. Just yesterday, we had a job fair who reached out to us for bilingual people and to help us recruit these bilingual people.”*

Interviewees described many community efforts to improve the quality of life for local Latino communities. Key organizations that were mentioned across many interviewees were Latino Memphis and La Paz. Having spaces where people can first come when they immigrate to the state was described as crucial for a Latino community organization. Additionally, these types of organizations can be important in the local Latino community becoming more visible by both shining a light on situation and serving as a microphone to amplify the voices of those in the local community to be heard across the state. Further, interviewees from other states in the South mentioned the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) as key voice for the immigrant and workers rights in the region.

Despite programs, such as Secure Communities, that can pit police against community, , there seems to be recognition in the power of building institutional trust to improve Latino lives, specifically with law enforcement. More survey respondents in Tennessee, compared to other Southern states, identified law enforcement as a key ally for local Latino communities. And in the recent past years, several media reports described efforts between community organizations and local law enforcement. For instance, a partnership between the Chattanooga police and La Paz community organization was developed to build a trusted network around the Latino community through training law enforcement officers. *“We work every day to educate area Latinos on how to become more civically engaged in the city, but we also need the rest of Chattanooga to take steps towards including them if we’re going to create a balanced community,”* said the executive director of La Paz.<sup>256</sup>



SOME HISPANICS FEEL THAT COMMUNITY-WISE THINGS ARE IMPROVING BUT POLICY-WISE THINGS HAVE BEEN STATIC



THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN BILINGUAL STAFF TO BETTER SERVE THE HISPANIC POPULATION



TENNESSEE HAS WITNESSED PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

# LATINOS IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN TENNESSEE

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“Hay líderes, siempre han habido desde que llegue, pero ahora hay lugares que se ayudan a los latinos con los impuestos, hay una coalición para los latinos Conexiones América que ayudan día a día, y la Cámara de Comercio aquí en Tennessee.”

—LATINA

## ON NEW BILINGUAL JOBS

“WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS HAVE SEEN A BIG INCREASE IN MORE BILINGUAL PEOPLE HIRED. JUST YESTERDAY, WE HAD A JOB FAIR WHO REACHED OUT TO US FOR BILINGUAL PEOPLE AND TO HELP US RECRUIT THESE BILINGUAL PEOPLE.”

—LATINA

“VERY DIVERSE COMMUNITY. BUT AT THE SAME TIME VERY SEGREGATED.” —LATINA

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“In Memphis it [the Latino population] has been growing. I hear of other areas... some more racist areas, that there have been anti-immigrant initiatives... people in Alabama have come to Tennessee after the anti-immigration bill.” —LATINO

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