



**Northfield MN
Community Visit Report
May 19, 2011**

On Thursday May 19, 2011, CLAC held a community forum at the Northfield Community Resource Center. The purpose was to capture the voice of the Latino community on education and economic development. We were honored by the participation of representatives of the City Council, DEED, Northfield Public Library, and University of Minnesota, nonprofit organizations, the community and others. We had a productive discussion and engaging session.

Meeting Agenda:

- I. Introductions and Networking
- II. Review of CLAC's mission and goals
- III. Forum objectives
- IV. Education : Achievement Gap
- V. Economic Development
- VI. General discussion
- VII. Video – Latino Artists: A Community Vision
- VIII. Adjournment

Presenters:

Hector Garcia, *Executive Director, CLAC*
Astrid Ollerenshaw, *Community Relations, CLAC*

Host:

Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin

Participants:

1. Carlos Quezada, Community member
2. Diana Lobo, Realtor Edina Realty
3. Pat Stenglein, Northfield Public Library
4. Genevieve Morales, DEED
5. Rachel Berkowl, Growing Up Healthy
6. Jorge Zuccolotto, Community member
7. Terin Mayer, Take Action Minnesota
8. Naurine Lennox, Social Worker Dpt, St. Olaf College
9. Antonio Alba, University of Minnesota
10. Joan Ennis, Reference Librarian, Northfield Public Library
11. Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, Director, Rural Enterprise Center
12. Barbar Burke, Riverwalk Maket Fair
13. Dean Kjerland, Riverwalk Maket Fair
14. Suzie Nakasian, Council Member, Northfield City Council

15. David Bly, Former Representative, Community
16. Dianne Aisenberg, Hispanic Outreach, Goodhue County
17. Gabriela Burk, University of Minnesota Extension
18. Bob Kell, Rural Enterprise Center

Minutes:

The meeting took place at the Community Resource Center Room 106 and 104.

Astrid welcomed participants, presented meeting agenda and introduced CLAC's executive director. Hector Garcia presented an overview of CLAC's mission and goals.

Astrid made a presentation of the statistics on the Latino education achievement gap. The conclusion was that Minnesota's high-school graduation disparity between Latino and European American students is one of the worst in the U.S. but the MN Latino graduation rate is near the national Latino median rate. The situation in Northfield and surrounding area is not as bad as in the rest of Minnesota; this area has been working with a nonprofit to raise the graduation rate to 90% among Latinos.

Hector presented data and comments on economic development in Minnesota and the need for an educated workforce in the state. He referred to a published study from Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018." This study indicates that Minnesota will be the second state in terms of the need for a well-educated workforce, meaning that some higher education will be required by 70% of the jobs.

At the end we presented the video "Latino Arts; A Community Vision and shared ideas around this topic.

Community Participation:

- The TORCH program is very successful. It has effected significant changes in the Northfield school system, achieving a 90% graduation rate among Latinos. For this reason, this model program should be replicated in other cities.
- Northfield Public Library is translating documents into Spanish with the goal of supporting and helping the Latino community. They are facing a challenge of Latino non-participation; they do not have many Latinos attending or using their services. NPL would like to change this and host as many Latino families as possible.
- There is the need for defining a strategy, which will help understand the current situation and can promote cultural competence. The strategy should include what Latinos in-need can do and how the majority community can communicate with Latinos. One suggestion was going to the people, in ways such as home visits. Also, it was recommended that the plan and strategy should include institutional mediation and explain cultural competence.
- At the Market Fair, there are opportunities for Latino food vendors to participate. Market Fair received grants from South Central Foundation, which can be used to provide access to the Market Fair. They are offering education on healthy eating and nutrition for children and mothers. The Market can also have Latino vendors of produce. There is the possibility to get grant money for creating a mobile food unit with ethnic food, especially chicken, since it is

grown in the area. At this point, they have a small number of Latino vendors and participants.

- The Latino community remains isolated; for example, they do not know if they are eligible for food-stamp benefits, they have trouble filling out applications, as well as in understanding and moving through the processes.
- Main employers are the 2 colleges, hospital, Jeannie-O, including a turkey-packing plant, a plastic extrusion factory, and vegetable canneries mostly for young workers. There are also unique businesses producing woolen blankets and blue cheese.
- Learning how to communicate with other cultures is very important for the future; colleges are trying to incorporate this concept into their curricula and programs.
- Legislators are slow to accept this need; some seem to be against the agenda of learning and sharing cultural differences.
- The community needs to get the Chambers of Commerce to invest in the immigrants who will serve the communities of MN, whether they are Latino, Somali or else.
- Bill is the president of the Chamber of Commerce; he is already on board with this agenda; the Legislature is concerned with the urgent, such as the budget. Maybe next year, the legislators will focus on the important through other bills. We need to watch for ideas that will help integrate us and not divide us.
- A new City Council, which was appointed a couple of months ago, is interested in consolidation of participation at meetings, but its representative expressed that they are having lots of meetings but not getting together to work on a strategy.
- The cultural competence on citizen participation will help to remove obstacles. There is a need to help Latinos get identification that makes them feel safe, like the “Matrícula Consular”, which at least gives individuals identification and information useful for others.
- Northfield leaders at this meeting would like to have a respectful and good relationship between law enforcement and citizens. Immigrant communities are afraid and, without advocacy, this issue could get worst.
- CLAC’s ED expressed that CLAC can help support or help reject bills that affect the Latino community. Some new bills are creating a situation of fear and not trust. Legislatures need to hear ideas and experiences from Latinos and others. There is a need to meet again to evaluate voicing opposition towards bills that can be harmful to diversity. Please plan to come back in the future to talk about this.
- There is a myth that is being spread in Northfield and surrounding areas; some people think that there is a connection between an increase of use and drugs dealers and Latinos moving to the area.
- Northfield community leader said he now understands what the CLAC office does; he also mentioned the Latino Economic Development Center.

Ideas about Video “Latino Arts a Community Vision”:

- **Community leaders would like to show this video to other groups and communities, like at the city council meeting for example.**
- **Contact businesses and their departments of diversity to present this video to them.**
- **Present the video at the library.**

Next Action Steps:

- Plan a follow up meeting with more community leaders. Define a strategy to be able to integrate and better help immigrant communities.
- Have a special one-to-one meeting with TORCH program creator and evaluate possibility to replicate in other cities.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm