

New Orleans Backgrounder

AMERICAS SOCIETY AND COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of mid-2007, an estimated 45.5 million Hispanics live in the U.S., approximately 15 percent of the total population. Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the nation and the largest one in 22 of the 50 states. Their collective purchasing power surpassed \$800 billion in 2007.

The nationwide growth of the Hispanic population is certainly reflected in New Orleans. By 2008, informal estimates suggested that 150,000 Hispanics had arrived in the Gulf Coast region affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. By 2006 the Hispanic population had already tripled in Orleans Parish, growing from 3.1 percent to 9.9 percent of the total population (in Jefferson Parish it grew from 8.1 percent to 9.6 percent). Hispanics have been essential to the rebuilding efforts and economic recovery of the city, representing nearly half of the reconstruction workers in New Orleans. Their work contributed to making 86.9 percent of households functional by April 2008. The limited availability of current population data and the focus on priority issues such as reconstruction has drawn attention away from the need to provide services and support to Hispanics. In the general context of vulnerability that most residents of New Orleans face given limited access to housing and health services, Hispanics are at a disadvantage due to limited English proficiency, modest financial literacy, and lack of cultural familiarity. This creates impediments to their advancement in the workplace and in the community.

Achieving greater integration of Hispanics into the fabric of American society is a public policy imperative with obvious benefits for the corporate bottom line. For employers, more effective integration increases worker loyalty, reduces employee turnover, boosts worker productivity and motivation, thereby increasing businesses' efficiency and competitiveness. Providing the tools for integration also builds social capital, opens opportunities for upward mobility, and increases Hispanics' income and purchasing power, which is injected back into the economy. A more integrated Hispanic population would facilitate greater multicultural communication and civic engagement, and reduce social tensions as well as minimize some of the costs associated with the arrival of new immigrants. The private sector can play a key role in integrating this country's largest pool of immigrants.

The Americas Society and Council of the Americas' *Hispanic Integration Initiative* highlights examples of major U.S. corporations that already offer (or sponsor) these important services. Their programs provide **education, skills development, financial literacy, English language acquisition**, access to **health care**, and promote **civic participation**. Members of the business council established as part of this initiative have made a commitment to expand and consolidate these activities. In addition, the goal of this project is to strengthen synergies between the public and private sector, and to develop joint initiatives that will help immigrants adjust to their new context while contributing to a constructive environment for interaction between the native population and increasingly multiethnically and culturally diverse communities.

"When Latinos are given opportunities for employment and advancement, companies benefit from the individuals' strong work ethic and the chance to boost their customer base."

-Patty Smitherman, "Habla Success?", *Atlanta Woman*, May 2004.

BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES

The AS/COA *Hispanic Integration Initiative* has identified examples of corporations in key sectors of the U.S. economy that promote the integration of Hispanic immigrants. This background document highlights specifically the examples from the New Orleans area. Best practices are catalogued by type of activity:

- Companies such as **Capital One** have supported organizations that provide **English language programs** as a way to foster a better work environment, reduce social tensions at the workplace and in the community, and enable businesses to provide better services and increase productivity. **Telemundo** and **WYES TV** have also promoted English language training programs. Noteworthy examples of other companies in the U.S. that promote English acquisition are **Miller and Long**, **Tecta America Corporation**, **Western Union**, **Norsan Group**, **Chick-Fil-A** and **Shaw Industries**.
- **The Greater New Orleans Federal Credit Union, ASI Federal Credit Union, Capital One Bank and Fidelity Homestead Savings Bank of New Orleans**, are among some of the financial institutions working to improve Hispanics' financial literacy in the area. Through initiatives such as facilitating **access to banking services, credit, mortgages and loans**, they provide this population with increased opportunities for economic and social integration. **Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citizens Home Loan, Inc., Wachovia Corporation**, and **Western Union** are other companies that are doing this at the national level.
- **Skills development** provides Hispanics with increased opportunities to perform well and have access to better jobs and wages. **Northrop Grumman, Harrah's Casino Hotels, Shell Oil, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana (HCCL)**, and the **Homebuilders' Association of New Orleans** are among some of the companies and organizations that provide or sponsor programs to offer specialized training and strengthen entrepreneurship among this population. They also support Hispanic workers' access to housing and transportation. **Georgia Power, Intercontinental Hotels Group**, and **Western Union** are among other companies in the U.S. that focus on the development of life and work skills among Hispanic workers.
- Through Spanish language training, bilingual health care materials and information campaigns directed specifically to Hispanics, **Ochsner Health Systems** is addressing some of the limitations in **access to health care** resulting from language and cultural barriers. At the national level, **Johnson & Johnson** and **Pfizer** are also reaching out to Hispanic customers. In New Orleans, local media such as **Radio Tropical, The Times Picayune, Cox Communications** and a local **Telemundo** channel have supported efforts to provide information in Spanish to the Hispanic community about health, employment and other relevant issues.
- Information about **citizenship** and voting rights is a way to encourage Hispanics' political participation, promote civic values, and reinforce immigrants' desire and commitment to become English language proficient and root themselves in the fabric of their community. **Harrah's Casino Hotels** has developed programs in this area. Nationally, **Telemundo, mun2** and **Univision** are working on initiatives related to Hispanic civic participation.

"Even the big companies—Toyota and Shell and Stewart Enterprises and Wal-Mart—all these companies are realizing how important this Hispanic demographic is and they want to do business with them."

-Darlene Kattan, Executive Director of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana, *New Orleans CityBusiness*, October 23, 2006.

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AMERICAS SOCIETY AND COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS

I. Introduction

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has been defined by the contributions of different ethnic groups to building culturally diverse communities and enriching the American society through complementary abilities. The integration of immigrants, defined as their full participation in and commitment to the host society and their exercise of corresponding rights and obligations, can be measured by their socioeconomic and political participation, their upward mobility and their ability to communicate in English. However, integration is not an automatic process; it is developed through generations and shaped by many factors including the characteristics of the immigrants as well as the contexts of the country and communities where they settle. Both immigrant groups and the host society participate in the process of integration, which involves institutions at the federal and state levels, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and individuals, both the native population and the immigrant groups.

Civil society has historically played a key role in the integration of immigrants in the absence of a formal federal policy. The U.S. government offers just a few programs that provide health services, education or English language training. Educators, health providers, librarians, immigrant advocates, civil rights organizations, NGOs, religious leaders, unions, employers, and philanthropic institutions have created mechanisms to accommodate recent immigrants and facilitate their adaptation. At the same time, they enable the native population (including ethnic groups from previous waves of immigration) to understand and accept new immigrants by creating spaces for positive interaction. As part of a two-way process, immigrants must seek to integrate, as most want to, but they must also be afforded feasible ways to do so. The private sector can help create such channels, and become such institutions of integration, just as they did during the last major wave of immigration in the early twentieth century.

In this context, the Americas Society and Council of the Americas believe that the public and private sectors should promote dialogue and address the challenge of integrating the Hispanic population in the United States—a reality that will remain regardless of the political

debate over immigration reform. We recognize the key role that businesses and employers play in promoting cohesion and integration among the Hispanic workforce. Most immigrants spend a great portion of their time at the workplace and this is one of the main arenas where they interact with other native or immigrant groups, use English, and have the opportunity to learn and take advantage of potential opportunities for upward mobility. Successful integration at the workplace benefits immigrants, fellow workers, employers, communities, and the overall economy and society. Hispanic immigrants make significant contributions now, but these could be increased by facilitating their further integration into American society.

In light of this fact, the *Hispanic Integration Initiative* draws attention to the practices developed by a number of businesses across the country to promote the integration of their Hispanic workforces or of the Hispanic consumer base. **Independently, or in partnership with community organizations, some major U.S. corporations offer (or sponsor) services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, skills development, information about naturalization processes and civic participation, tools to build financial literacy and access to credit and the housing market, scholarships for adult or child education programs, health care workshops, and other types of training.** These businesses aim to encourage and facilitate the integration of their foreign-born employees and their families into the communities they live and work in. Their initiatives serve as significant examples demonstrating the importance of joining public and private sector efforts to effectively address the challenge of integration, both by aiding immigrants in adapting to their new context and by facilitating the native population's adjustment to interacting with multiethnically and culturally diverse groups.

II. New Orleans as a New Gateway for Hispanic Immigrants

Before the 1990s, Louisiana had not been a traditional destination for immigrants. The foreign-born population represented about 2 percent of the total population in 1980. Hondurans, one of the main immigrant groups in the state, had settled in New Orleans since the 1940s as workers for the United Fruit Company, which shipped bananas from Honduran plantations. A relatively small number of Cubans, Costa Ricans, Guatemalans, Mexicans, and Nicaraguans also lived in New Orleans.

However, in the 1990s, as the demand for labor grew in shipbuilding yards and in the oil industry in the southern coastal areas, Mexican immigrants began to arrive in larger numbers in Louisiana and New Orleans. As well, many Hondurans, Nicaraguans and migrants from other

In the 1990s, as the demand for labor grew in shipbuilding yards and in the oil industry in the southern coastal areas, Mexican immigrants began to arrive in larger numbers in Louisiana and New Orleans. After Katrina, Hispanic workers have contributed to supplying the much-needed labor force in New Orleans. Half of the construction workers in New Orleans are Hispanic. Given that about 30 percent of residents remain displaced or have not returned to New Orleans the presence of new migrant workers is key for the success of existing businesses and new businesses opening in New Orleans.

countries in Central America arrived in 1998 after the devastation left by Hurricane Mitch.¹ The Hispanic population in Louisiana increased by 15.8 percent between 1990 and 2000. According to U.S. Census data approximately 15,000 Hispanics lived in New Orleans in 2000. However, this number was considered an underestimation given the large influx of Hispanics to the region. For example, by some estimates, in 2006 there were about 140,000-150,000 Hondurans in the New Orleans area, the largest Honduran population outside Honduras.²

The growing presence of immigrants, mostly Hispanic, in the Southeast, has implied profound changes in the economic, social, cultural, and political landscape, transforming conceptions of regional identity and bi-racial relations, settlement patterns, demographics, and demands on infrastructure and services. In the case of New Orleans, political and social tensions have resulted from changes in the city's demographic composition following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Given the limited number of resources and the region's recent experience with Hispanic immigration, many state, city and parish institutions as well as community-based programs dealing with immigrant integration are at early stages of development and existing initiatives face great demands on their services and resources.

"...leading companies [...] have realized that reaching out to the Latino community and workforce results in higher customer loyalty and increased revenue."

-Patty Smitherman, "¿Habla Success?", *Atlanta Woman*, May 2004.

This situation represents a key challenge for the future of the city and the region and illustrates the need for collaborative initiatives between the public and private sectors that encourage integration. Some noteworthy examples of public, private and civil society efforts to promote the integration of Hispanics in New Orleans are highlighted in this document. The objective is to emphasize the need for integration policies as well as identify and disseminate information about best practices led by community-based groups, academic institutions, local governments and, particularly, by businesses.

III. Immigration to New Orleans after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's landing on August 29, 2005, the population of New

A significant part of the growth in the past three years has been due to the arrival of Hispanic immigrants attracted by the large demand for workers to rebuild the city. Informal estimates report the Hispanic population reached 100,000 in 2007 and 150,000 in 2008 (doubling the estimated number of Hispanics in the area before Katrina).

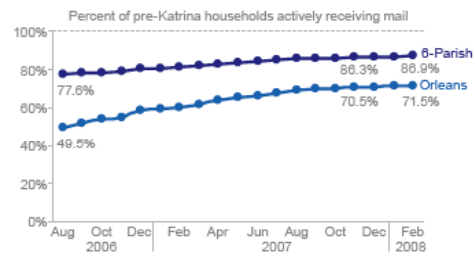
Orleans was reduced by more than half and the return of residents in the past three years has been slow. By early 2008, the New Orleans population reached the 300,000 mark, which represents about two-thirds of the pre-Katrina population.³ A significant part of the growth in the past three years has been due to the arrival of Hispanic immigrants attracted by the large demand for workers to rebuild the city.

Given the irregularity in demand for workers as well as the difficulty in obtaining information about migrant workers who live in hotels, shelters, tent cities and other

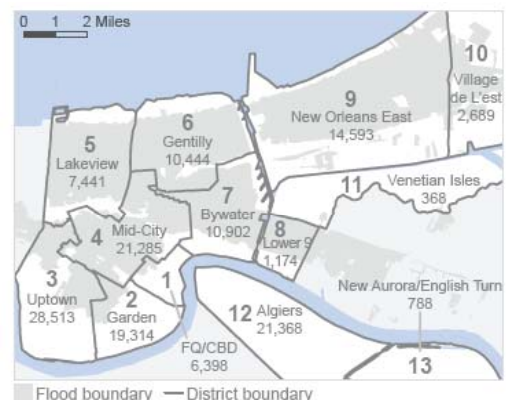
temporary arrangements, large discrepancies exist in regard to the number of Hispanic workers in the New Orleans area. This poses a challenge for assessing their needs, recognizing their contributions, and generating the attention of government officials, the private sector and support groups to the issue of Hispanic integration in New Orleans.

The number of Hispanic workers in the New Orleans reconstruction zones was estimated at around 60,000 in 2006 (40,875 for Jefferson Parish and 21,319 for Orleans Parish).⁴ Informal estimates report the Hispanic population reached 100,000 in 2007 and 150,000 in 2008 (doubling the estimated number of Hispanics in the area before Katrina).⁵ Although most of the population had previously concentrated in Jefferson Parish, they are now moving to other parts of the city.⁶

The New Orleans area continues to repopulate but at a much slower rate than one year ago.



Substantially unflooded planning districts 2, 3, and 12 are now home to nearly half of New Orleans' households



Source: Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, "State of Policy and Progress. April 2008: Two Years, Eight Months Since Katrina Made Landfall", The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

“After the hurricane the entire city was empty, and then all of a sudden you saw these new Hispanic, Latino workers in town...There is still concern about immigrants coming in and taking jobs that could go to local individuals, but we know there is a huge demand for this type of work force, construction workers, and the local supply is not enough to meet the demand, so you do need this help.”

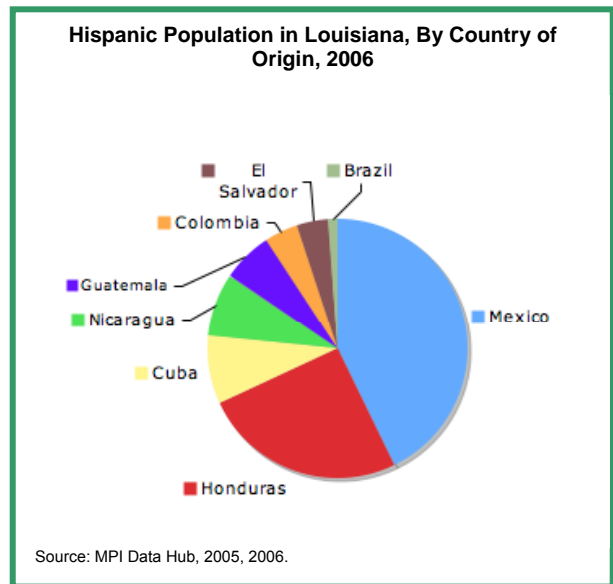
-Martin Gutiérrez, quoted by Priscilla Greear, “New Orleans Archdiocese Increases Outreach To Hispanic Laborers”, *The Georgia Bulletin*, August 24, 2006.

Before the hurricane, the Hispanic population in the Greater New Orleans area constituted 3.1 percent of the total population in Orleans Parish and 8.1 percent in Jefferson Parish.⁷ By August 2006, according to a survey by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, this population had grown to 9.9 percent in Orleans Parish and 9.6 percent in Jefferson Parish, though the total population of those parishes had diminished.⁸

The post-Katrina migrant flow includes many labor migrants from Central America—particularly Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans, but also Brazilians who were already in the country.⁹ Although a large number are undocumented, many are U.S.-born and naturalized

citizens or guest workers with H-2 visas. Most new immigrants are Hispanic but there are also African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and non-Hispanic Whites.¹⁰

By 2006, almost half of the foreign-born population (48.3 percent) in Louisiana came from Latin America. Of this total, about 36.2 percent were from Mexico and Central America (with Mexico and Honduras as the main sending countries); 7.3 percent from the Caribbean (with 3.4 percent coming from Cuba); and 4.8 percent from South America (with Colombia and Brazil as the leading sending countries).¹¹



As Elizabeth Fussell has noted, one year after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the New Orleans population had shifted from being 67 percent African American and less than a third white, with small Asian and Hispanic minorities, “to having nearly equal proportions of blacks and whites (47.0 percent and 42.7 percent respectively) and somewhat larger Asian (3.5 percent) and particularly Hispanic (9.6 percent) minorities.”¹² This represents a major shift in the ethnic and racial composition of the city, a situation that has created tensions among the city’s residents. It is likely that many migrant workers will remain in the city even after the demand for low-skill work in construction declines (a survey conducted by Elizabeth Fussell in 2007 reported that 55 percent of Nicaraguans, 67 percent of Brazilians and 38.5 percent of Mexicans respectively, said they planned to stay permanently or more than a

year).¹³ The future of the city will be determined in part, by how the local community, the government and the private sector address the reality of new immigration to New Orleans and their ability to provide housing, employment, education and health services.

A number of companies and community-based organizations in New Orleans are leading the efforts to promote the integration of Hispanic immigrants through English language programs, facilitating access to financial institutions, life and work skills training, support in business development, assistance in housing and transportation, and access to health care. These efforts

exemplify the social responsibility of the business community and demonstrate the positive results of Hispanic integration for the local community, for the companies involved and for the US economy and society in general.

“Because they are young and lack roots in the United States, many recent migrants are ideal for the explosion of construction jobs to come. Those living in the U.S. will relocate to the Gulf Coast, while others will come from south of the border. Most will not intend to stay where their new jobs are, but the longer the jobs last, the more likely they will settle permanently”.

-Gregory Rodriguez, "La Nueva Orleans", *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2005.

IV. Hispanics' Economic Contributions

Immigration represents costs and benefits both for receiving and sending communities. In the case of the United States, each new wave of immigration has implied competition for native workers and increased demand for welfare and education services. At the same time, immigrants offer new capabilities, ideas and talent that bring social, cultural and economic benefits. In New Orleans, in particular, there is tension given limited employment and housing opportunities for former residents of the city, who see immigrants as competitors and as a force that has depressed wage standards. It is recognized that generally lower levels of education and access to low-paying jobs can make immigrants more prone to using welfare services for their children. The growing Hispanic population, not unlike other immigrant groups, also increases the demand for education and health services. In some sectors of employment, the arrival of new immigrants represents job competition for native workers.

However, in general, when the costs of immigration are measured against Hispanics' economic and social contributions the final balance is positive. Given current demographic and economic characteristics in the United States, Hispanic immigrants are essential for filling gaps in the labor force and maintaining productivity levels. In addition, their presence signifies an increasing number of consumers and an enlarged tax-paying base. The full integration of Hispanics into American society can contribute to maximizing these gains and minimizing the costs. For example, by providing the skills necessary for upward mobility—through educational attainment, language acquisition or specialized training—immigrants gain access to better jobs while the likely need for welfare services is reduced.

Although immigration to New Orleans and Louisiana is relatively recent and Hispanic immigrants are at a disadvantage in terms of education, English language proficiency, types of occupations and income levels, they have led reconstruction efforts and made significant contributions to the state and local economies.

"A distinctive characteristic of the Hispanic immigrant community is its ethic of hard work and entrepreneurial spirit. There are currently 2 million Hispanic-owned firms in the U.S. and they are the fastest-growing business community in the country. This is evidence of their motivation to improve their position in the United States. Through their businesses and entrepreneurship they are also making significant contributions to economic growth in the country."

-Salvador Gomez, Chairman/CEO, Source One Management, Inc. and Founder of the National Hispanic Business Information Clearing House (NHBIC), May 12, 2008.

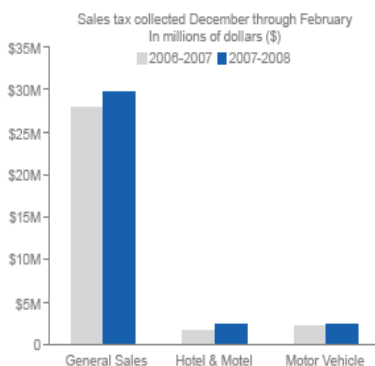
- Half of the construction workers in New Orleans are Hispanic. The Brookings Institution reports that by April 2008 New Orleans was home to 71.5 percent of the households it had before Katrina; in the six-parish area, 86.9 percent of households are functioning.¹⁴ This is due in part to the work of Hispanic immigrants who have “gutted, roofed and painted houses and hauled away garbage, debris and downed trees.”¹⁵

“Even after the construction work dries up, which isn’t expected for a year or two, there will be a huge demand for waiters, cooks, janitors and maids—and Latinos are likely to fill many of those jobs.”

–“Immigrants rush to New Orleans as builders fight for workers”, *Workpermit.com*, October 11, 2005.

- Hispanic workers have contributed to supplying the much-needed labor force in New Orleans. With 30 percent of residents still displaced or not yet returned, the presence of new migrant workers is essential for the success of the city’s existing and new businesses.¹⁶ By the last quarter of 2006, 79 percent of pre-Katrina employers had returned to New Orleans and 91 percent to the metro area (by 2007, 9,368 employers had closed or moved out since Katrina).¹⁷ As of the second quarter of 2007, 6,093 firms started up or moved into the area. Meanwhile unemployment rates continue near historic lows of 3.1 percent, which makes it difficult for employers to fill vacancies.¹⁸

Sales tax revenue in New Orleans grew by 8 percent in December 2007 through February 2008 as compared with the same months one year earlier



Source: Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, “State of Policy and Progress. April 2008: Two Years, Eight Months Since Katrina Made Landfall”, The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

- Throughout the South, Hispanic immigrants have played a critical role in stabilizing the tax-paying population in many communities. Without new Hispanic immigrants, large areas would be experiencing a population decline, and a corresponding increase in local taxes.¹⁹ Nationally, Hispanic immigrants’ tax payments exceed the costs of services they are expected to use.²⁰ Their taxes are also a significant contribution the Social Security system. New Orleans sales tax revenue in December 2007 through February 2008 rose by 8 percent compared to the same months in 2007.²¹

- As consumers, Hispanics make a significant contribution to the economy. In 2006, Hispanics' nationwide spending power was estimated to be about \$798 billion (compared to \$491 billion in 2000); this represents a 3.4 percent increase in buying power (from 5 percent to 8.4 percent) between 1990 and 2006.²² Hispanic buying power is expected to grow faster than any other group. By 2011, it is estimated to increase by 458 percent, a larger percentage than that of Asians (434 percent), Native Americans (270 percent) and African Americans (237 percent).²³ This is explained both by the demographic growth of the Hispanic population (through immigration and fertility rates) and by their gradual access to better employment opportunities.

“As the new immigrants grow older and utilize more health services, and as more wives join their husbands, evening out the current gender imbalance and leading to more children, the demands they make on public services will increase but so too may their contributions to the tax bases supporting those services.”

- Rakesh Kochar, Roberto Suro and Sonya Tafoya, "The New Latino South: The Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth", *Pew Hispanic Center*, July 26, 2005.

“The future growth of the Hispanic population will not be as explosive as it was a year ago. However the growth that we have now will be consistent as long as there are jobs available. New Orleans residents appreciate the contributions of Hispanics to the city, but there are still many social walls to overcome. If we educate and embrace these people as fellow citizens, then hopefully crime rates will drop, boundaries will be forgotten and New Orleans will be recognized as a trilingual city.”

-Andrea Pinto, in “Tropical New Orleans”, *Neighbors Partnership Network*, December 11, 2007.

Although immigrant contributions are generally recognized, precarious economic conditions such as those present in New Orleans can shift public attitudes toward immigrants and generate concerns about their costs and the transformation of communities. This leads to social division and an unwelcome environment for Hispanics, including those who are legal residents or citizens. In the past few years, state and local officials in New Orleans, and throughout the country, have faced increasing pressures to respond to this situation. While some of the measures put into place focus on integration, others aim to exclude and dissuade immigrants from settling, particularly undocumented Hispanics. The results yield consequences in terms of social cohesion as

well as economic development.²⁴ At the same time, community-based groups, public institutions, philanthropists and the private sector are promoting initiatives that aid Hispanics in the integration process. These will be explained in detail in the next sections.

V. The Challenge of Hispanic Integration in New Orleans

Integration studies across different cities and states conclude that “context matters.” As Helen Marrow explains, “the size and characteristics of cities, towns, and rural areas can be expected to influence how immigrants experience the United States and interact with local Americans; how local Americans react to new immigrants and receive them; and how existing institutional structures, cultures, and historical memories factor into the long-term incorporation of immigrants at the “new” destinations, versus “old” historical destinations in major cities.”²⁵ The high levels of poverty, the limited access to housing and public services, and the racial tensions in New Orleans have an impact in the integration of Hispanic newcomers.

The vulnerability and high level of poverty among the population of New Orleans was made evident after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The median household income for New Orleans was \$27,133 and over 27 percent of New Orleans lived below the poverty line when Katrina hit.²⁶ After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the conditions in which the native and foreign-born live

The high levels of poverty, the limited access to housing and public services, and the racial tensions in New Orleans have an impact in the integration of Hispanic newcomers.

and work have worsened. The city lacks basic infrastructure and support systems such as affordable and safe housing, public schools, public transportation, child care, and public benefits.²⁷ In this context, recently arrived Hispanics are vulnerable given their limited English proficiency and, in many cases, their undocumented status, as they are ineligible for most forms

“Thousands of workers have been lured to New Orleans to rebuild the city at the lowest cost and highest rate of profit. Migrant workers—immigrant and non-immigrant, documented and undocumented—are facing challenges similar to those of survivors. Moreover, the city’s reconstruction plan is dominated by a system of private contractors that relies upon and benefits from the vulnerability of migrant workers. Unable to vote or otherwise participate in the reconstruction of New Orleans, migrant workers similarly are unable to hold institutions accountable—even as they rebuild the city.”

-Judith Browne-Dianis, Jennifer Lai, Marielena Hincapie and Saket Soni, “And Injustice For All: Workers’ Lives in the Reconstruction of New Orleans”, July 2006.

of federal aid available. This puts them at risk of employer abuse, homelessness, and health and safety problems. Support from the public and private sectors is necessary for providing services and assistance. This will help reduce the risks faced by this population and facilitate their integration through access to better employment and housing, English language courses, and health and education services.

Employment and Wages

At the national level, while the foreign-born population fills jobs in a variety of sectors—mostly in the bottom and top layers of the labor market—the majority of recent immigrants from Latin America occupy low-wage jobs. Their concentration in these types of occupations is due in part to lower levels of education, skill sets and work experience, limited English proficiency, and in some cases immigration status.²⁸ Nonetheless, in the past decade the percentage of foreign-born Hispanics in low-wage occupations at the national level decreased from 42 percent in 1995 to 36 percent in 2005.²⁹

Still, in New Orleans most Hispanics work in lower-wage jobs.³⁰ About 45 percent of reconstruction workers are Hispanic, with most of them from Mexico (43 percent), Honduras (32 percent), Nicaragua (9 percent), and El Salvador (8 percent).³¹ The majority arrived in New Orleans after August 2005 and many were already living in the United States (41 percent in Texas and 10 percent in Florida).³² Seventy percent of construction workers are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, while 25 percent are undocumented workers and five percent have a work permit.³³ The majority are male (93 percent) and the average age is 38 years.³⁴

The construction jobs they perform (including demolition, hauling out debris, putting in drywall, etc.) are poorly paid and generally performed under unhealthy and unsafe conditions. On average, immigrants earn \$12 an hour, working 10 hours a day, seven days a week, or \$8 per hour with 70 to 80 hours of work per week.³⁵ Workers with higher skills such as flooring and tile specialist, carpenters and roofers generally have higher wages. As reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Workers Justice Center, migrant workers have also been victims of employer abuse—50 percent of migrant workers reported receiving less money than they expected when paid and 41 percent said they had problems being paid.³⁶

“While the immediate aftermath focused on the inadequacies of the relief efforts, a rising death toll, and the more than one million persons displaced by the storm (including legal and illegal immigrants), concern has now shifted to reconstruction in these areas. In fact, very soon after the hurricane, newspapers reported that Spanish-speaking, foreign-born laborers were arriving in large numbers, many lured by the promise of better earnings in the construction industry.”

-Katharine Donato and Shirin Hakimazdeh, “The Changing Face of the Gulf Coast”, January, 2006.

English Acquisition

Data from the Migration Policy Institute indicate that English proficiency is a determining factor of wages in immigrant families. English-speaking immigrants earn 17 percent more than non-English speaking immigrants; those who are fluent in oral and written English earn about 24

percent more than those who lack fluency, regardless of their qualifications.³⁷ Nationally, 11.3 percent of those who spoke only English lived in poverty, compared to 21.6 percent of those who spoke Spanish at home.³⁸ Children from English deficient homes usually have low academic performance, which limits opportunities for advancement in the future.

"Hispanics have very high aspirations for their children's education. They see education as a gateway to a successful future and they want to be engaged in their children's development. However, in many cases low levels of English are a limitation. Sesame Workshop is in a privileged position to use the power of media to achieve the fastest and most effective way for Spanish speaking children to acquire the language and literacy skills needed to succeed in school."

-Anita Stewart, V.P. Corporate Sponsorship, Sesame Workshop, March 25, 2008.

Due to Hispanics' short history in the country (particularly in new destinations), citizenship rates and English language fluency tend to be low, which limits access to education and better employment opportunities. Overall, the foreign-born Limited English Proficient (LEP) population in Louisiana increased by 27.3 percent between 2000 and 2006. Almost half of the foreign-born population (46.9 percent) is LEP and the majority of this group (64.6 percent) are Spanish-speakers. In Louisiana, 19.6 percent of persons who spoke Spanish at home lived in poverty.³⁹

Education

It is estimated that individuals with a bachelor's degree in the U.S. earn nearly twice as much, on average, as those with a high school diploma. In addition, holding a college degree affects the likelihood of unemployment. In 2006, high school graduates had a 4.3 percent unemployment rate, compared to 2.3 percent for college graduates.⁴⁰ Thus, low levels of education among the immigrant population limit their access to higher paying jobs.

The number of foreign-born in Louisiana with less than a high school diploma increased by 41.8 percent between 1990 and 2000; this number decreased by 8.7 percent between 2000 and 2006.⁴¹ Still, in 2006, almost 30 percent of the population in the New Orleans area had less than a high school degree (14 percent in Jefferson Parish and 13.4 percent in Orleans Parish).⁴² By 2006, 25 percent of all foreign-born in Louisiana had not completed high school.⁴³

The level of education is related to the language spoken at home. In Louisiana, while 19.3 percent of those who spoke only English lacked a high school diploma, 28 percent of the Spanish-speaking population had not completed high school.⁴⁴ Given their generally low levels of education, most Hispanics who recently arrived in Louisiana take jobs that require lower skills, which in turn offer limited opportunities for upward mobility.

The growth of the Hispanic school-age population in New Orleans will pose a key challenge for schools, as most of these children speak Spanish at home and require English as a

Second Language (ESL) training. The fact that many public schools in New Orleans are still not open represents a challenge both for the children of immigrants and for the returning population. By December 2006, only four of New Orleans's 117 public school schools had reopened, with charter schools filling the gap.⁴⁵ According to the New Orleans Index, produced by the Brookings Institute, from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 public school enrollment increased by 738 students in Orleans Parish, compared to a gain of 514 students one year earlier. Enrollment in all other parishes decreased in the same period, which could indicate that some students are transferring back to Orleans Parish.⁴⁶

"... the New Orleans region has recovered the vast majority of its job base and labor force. The challenge is that two key sectors— health and education, and leisure and hospitality—are still missing one-quarter of their pre-Katrina workers, hurting schools, health care, and tourism."

-Amy Liu, Deputy Director, Metropolitan Policy Program, "Two Years after the Storm: Housing Needs in the Gulf Coast", September 25, 2007.

"Many did not realize the devastation here. They believed housing wouldn't be a problem. They find themselves in trouble in terms of housing and health care. For regular citizens, health care is a mess; for immigrant workers it's even worse."

-Martin Gutiérrez, quoted by Priscilla Greear, *The Georgia Bulletin*, August 24, 2006.

Health

Few workers in New Orleans have medical insurance or seek medical care. As documented in the report, "Rebuilding After Katrina: A Population-Based Study of Labor and Human Rights in New Orleans," less than half (43 percent) of construction workers had medical insurance in 2006. Among construction workers who report health problems, only 27 percent sought medical treatment. Many workers lack health and safety training on the job as well as

the appropriate protective gear. Only 16 percent reported having gloves, goggles and a face mask while working under unsanitary and dangerous conditions. Many of them suffer serious injuries on the job and frequently report health problems.⁴⁷

Although the region has recovered the majority of its job base and labor force, the health and education sectors are still missing one-quarter of their pre-Katrina population.⁴⁸

National vs. Local Trends

Based on levels of educational attainment, language acquisition, socioeconomic advancement and naturalization, national studies conclude that new immigrant groups such as Hispanics are integrating along similar patterns as previous generations.⁴⁹ While evidence points to the integration of Hispanics, particularly among the second and third generations, first generation immigrants face challenges due to lower levels of English proficiency and education when compared to the rest of the population. Not only does this limit access to information and

public services, which is a key factor for their full participation in social, economic and political processes, but it also impedes their ability to obtain jobs with better wages and health benefits that offer opportunities for upward mobility. Moreover, it restricts their capacity to provide educational support to their children.

Hispanics in new settlement areas such as the Southeast are particularly in need of support in their process of integration.

Considering immigrants' characteristics in terms of age, education and English proficiency, the integration of Hispanics in New Orleans, particularly the most recently arrived, is at a very early stage and represents great challenges both for the immigrants themselves and for the host community.

The evidence of Hispanics' economic integration at the national level demonstrates the willingness and capacity of Hispanic immigrants to actively participate and contribute to society. As has been the case with previous waves of immigrants, and with Hispanic immigrants in traditional settlement areas, the second and third generations of Hispanics in new destinations such as New Orleans will likely follow similar patterns of integration if provided with adequate infrastructure and resources. The role of civil society, the public and private sectors is key in supporting this process and drawing attention to the needs and contributions of Hispanics in New Orleans.

"...Migration is a selective process —it is those with the most ambition who leave the security of home to pursue a new life elsewhere. Though drive and ambition are hard to measure in population surveys, they are nevertheless critical factors in successful economic integration and can make up for some of the deficits found in communities..."

-Anita I. Drever, "New Neighbors in Dixie: The Community Impacts of Latino Migration to Tennessee", 2006.

VI. The Role of Community Groups and the Public Sector

As documented above, the majority of recent arrivals to New Orleans have low incomes, low levels of English proficiency and education, moderate financial literacy, and low rates of naturalization. In particular, undocumented immigrants are more likely to be less educated and concentrate in lower-wage, lower-skilled jobs.

Areas with recent Hispanic settlement have little experience in accommodating diversity and offer limited infrastructure, both government and community-based. Furthermore, immigrant communities are dispersed and have difficulty in assisting newcomers. Limited resources to deal with the needs of immigrants (both Hispanic and other groups) exacerbate tensions between the native population and new arrivals. As well, the limited availability of English language courses, a growing need for translators in schools and health systems, and competition for placements in a limited number of schools and for housing lead to negative perceptions of immigrants and backlash.

“Studies have demonstrated that immigrants who are marginalized and face discrimination become acculturated at a slower rate and in a different manner than do those who are more accepted.”

-Elaine C. Lacy, “Immigrants in the Southeast: Public Perceptions and Integration”, *News and Views*, 2008.

Strong local and regional identities in the South play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward immigrants. This has created inter-ethnic conflicts that differentiate the region’s response to immigration.⁵⁰ Although tensions between Hispanics and African Americans exist throughout the country, the number of African Americans is larger in the Southeast, and particularly in New Orleans. Those with lower incomes and limited access to institutional support to aid their return to their homes and jobs perceive great costs from Hispanic immigration.

At the parish level, perceptions of the costs of immigrants are exacerbated, particularly in the areas with the most recent and fastest growth of immigration; there, the fiscal implications of providing services to immigrants are more significant.⁵¹

These anxieties usually ignore the fact that immigrants pay taxes, help maintain productivity levels, and fuel the local economy through their purchasing power, while smaller percentages use public schools, health care and other benefits.

In order to develop successful and far-reaching policies, the characteristics of Hispanic population need to be considered in the design and implementation of education and health care programs, housing and transportation infrastructure.

Community-based Initiatives

The **Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans** (<http://www.ccano.org>) is one of main religious organizations that advocates for the support of the Hispanic community and provides services for this group. Catholic Charities currently operates 51 programs in the area for the entire community, two of which specifically target the Hispanic and immigrant community: Hispanic Apostolate Community Services and Immigration and Refugee Services. The Hispanic Apostolate Community Services offers emergency assistance through financial support (they have provided more than \$10 million in direct assistance), meals, counseling, and welfare and legal referral. Its services also include tax preparation services, English and citizenship classes, tutoring, workers' rights education and case assistance, and health referrals. The Immigration

"We truly make a big positive impact...The object of this collective effort is to make Hispanics integral, productive members of the community. Then relationships will be symbiotic; people helping each other to make New Orleans even better than what it used to be...Even if this simply means that one mother or father in the ESL program is now capable of talking to their child's teacher, then we have made a difference."

-Martin Gutierrez, quoted by Andrea Pinto, *Neighbors Partnership Network*, December 11, 2007.

and Refugee Services offers immigration counseling and legal services for low-income and indigent immigrants, asylees, refugees and victims of domestic violence. They are also a partner at the St. Joseph Rebuild Center, which serves the homeless and working poor, and link Spanish-speakers to the services offered at the Center and in their other locations. Additionally, other Catholic Charities programs have bilingual staff members that facilitate services for Spanish-speakers, including family and trauma counseling for survivors of Hurricane Katrina in the Counseling Solutions program.

According to Martin Gutierrez, director of the Hispanic Apostolate Pastoral Office and Executive Director of Neighborhood and Community Services for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the demand for their services has increased three-fold from 5,000 to 15,000 individuals after Katrina. In the two years following Katrina, the Job Service Office of the Catholic Charities assisted 2,674 individuals seeking employment by providing support in writing resumes and applications and preparing for interviews, as well as job training and placement.⁵² The organization's adult ESL programs have the highest demand. More than 500 adults are enrolled in the ESL programs, which are taught at several sites around the city.⁵³ The support from private donors, as exemplified by grants from Capital One (described in the next section), is essential in continuing these efforts.

Additionally, in partnership with **CLINIC, Loyola Law Clinic and Southern Poverty Law Center** the Archdiocese helped establish the Workers' Justice Center. The Center provides Hispanic workers with information about their rights and promotes their organization in order to

defend against discrimination and employer abuse.⁵⁴ Through the **Latino Health Access Network**, the Archdiocese refers Hispanics to community organizations and health providers that offer medical care to uninsured and underinsured.

Another religious group that has been actively involved with the Hispanic community since 1998 is the **Monte de los Olivos Lutheran Church** in Kenner, Louisiana. Since Hurricane Katrina, Pastor Jesus Gonzalez has provided shelter and food to local residents affected by the hurricane and new Hispanic population. The church also offers English classes and clinics in addition to religious services.⁵⁵

The **New Orleans Workers Justice Center (NOWJC)**, directed by Saket Soni, (<http://www.neworleansworkerjustice.org>) seeks to empower workers and promote worker participation in the post-Katrina New Orleans. Through the development of the **Workers' Center**, the NOWJC seeks to organize day laborers and migrant workers in general and develop leaders within the community so they can provide support in wage and discrimination claims, police harassment, immigration raids, and dangerous working and living conditions. In the medium and long-term, the Center's objective is to develop the necessary infrastructure in order to defend and expand workers' rights at the local and state level, and lead the organization of multi-racial and racial justice movements to support construction and hospitality/service workers. Among members of the Worker Justice Center are the Advancement Project, Common Ground, Gillis Long Poverty Law Center, Hope House, Latino Health Outreach Project, Loyola Law Clinic, National Immigration Law Center, New Orleans Students United for Worker Justice, People's Institute, and the People's Hurricane Relief Fund's (PHRF) Economic Justice Committee.

"Should we allow New Orleans to be rebuilt on the backs of the most vulnerable workers? Is this our vision of a new New Orleans?"

-Southern Poverty Law Center, "Broken Levees, Broken Promises: New Orleans' Migrant Workers in Their Own Words", 2006.

In addition to its social work, an important contribution of the NOWJC, together with the **Advancement Project** and the **National Immigration Law Center**, was the publication of the report "And Injustice For All: Workers' Lives in the Reconstruction of New Orleans." Based on surveys of workers in the New Orleans area the report provides information about the challenges they face in terms of discrimination, access to housing, crime, work conditions and health.⁵⁶ The Catholic Legal Immigration Network also published the document "Employment Problems in Louisiana and Mississippi: An Advocacy Manual". Its main goal is to give workers guidance on their rights and identifying situations in which they should seek legal advice. It also refers them to government agencies and organizations that can provide legal assistance, health care, job placement, training and education.⁵⁷

Puentes New Orleans, Inc., is a non-profit organization launched in 2007 (<http://www.puentesno.org>). Originally founded by a group of Hispanic professionals in 2003 as The Greater New Orleans Hispanic Community Center, Puentes seeks to empower Hispanics and encourage, promote and advance their full integration to the New Orleans community. Its main programs are related to housing, economic, cultural and educational growth, research and advocacy. Through the LatiNola website (<http://www.latinolanow.org>), Puentes seeks to organize and inform Hispanics about issues relevant to the community and promote their integration and full participation in New Orleans through civic engagement. For example, in February 2008, LatiNola launched “LatiNola Votes!” campaign to get 2,000 Latino voters registered before the Presidential elections. Lucas Díaz, Executive Director of Puentes, also launched a newsletter for the Hispanic community (“LatiNola Speaks”) and is working on a project to facilitate access to housing for Hispanics. Corporations such as Deutsche Bank America, ASI Federal Credit Union, Capital One Bank and non-profit organizations including Providence Community Housing, Enterprise Community Partners, and the Hispanic Apostolate support Puentes.

In 2004, the **Southern Poverty Law Center**, a non-profit organization established in 1971 in Alabama, launched the *Immigrant Justice Project* (IJP) (<http://www.splcenter.org/legal/ijp.jsp>). Led by Attorney J.J. Rosenbaum, the main goal of the IJP is to provide legal assistance to migrant workers in the south through litigation and community outreach. After Hurricane Katrina, the Center added an initiative dedicated specifically to protecting workers in New Orleans. The IJP established a toll-free number and outreach programs in the city to monitor discrimination and bad workplace conditions among migrant workers. It filed two lawsuits against major reconstruction contractors in New Orleans, and has advocated for stronger federal enforcement of worker protection laws. The IJP has also advocated for legislative reform to improve existing wage and hour conditions. In partnership with the Loyola Law School Workplace Justice Clinic and the Hispanic Apostolate legal assistance and representation is provided for workers. Through publications such as "Broken Levees, Broken Promises: New Orleans' Migrant Workers in Their Own Words," the Center seeks to bring public attention to issues of worker exploitation in New Orleans.

"Latinos have given a lot of support to New Orleans. We didn't come here to harm anyone—we're here doing our best. We ask of you, the authorities in New Orleans and anywhere else, that you just look at us too. Look at us because we came to better your city, to better the state. We're seeking only the rights that everyone deserves."

-Hector, a Hispanic migrant worker, quoted in "Broken Levees, Broken Promises: New Orleans' Migrant Workers in Their Own Words", 2006.

Various universities and public schools in New Orleans and Louisiana and neighboring states have created special programs dedicated to the Hispanic community, focused both on

research and on education services for this population. In 2006, **Tulane University** incorporated a service-learning component to the undergraduate core curriculum to foster faculty and students' civic engagement and involvement in the revival of the city. The **Center for Public Service** at Tulane (<http://tulane.edu/cps>) was established in 2006 to promote the engagement of faculty and students with the larger New Orleans community through public service initiatives, some of which involve the Hispanic community.⁵⁸ In June 2008, Tulane hosted the Language Access Coalition's community leaders forum to discuss possible solutions to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) among the Vietnamese and Hispanic communities in New Orleans.

Southeastern Louisiana University provides instructors for business development workshops and seminars at the Workers Justice Center and at other community group events. The university also offers management oversight and administrative support for the **Hispanic Business Resources and Technology Center (HBRTC)** (described in detail below).

The **Jefferson Parish Public Schools'** Adult Education programs offer ESL courses and donate classroom space for community groups that provide education and training services.

Labor unions have also helped to protect New Orleans' workers (including Hispanic immigrants), train them and help with reconstruction efforts. The **Service Employees International Union (SEIU)** and the **Laborers Union** established a new Worker Resource

"An investment by private foundations, along with other contributing sources, in developing an infrastructure consisting of Latino CBOs is most needed in parts of the country where Latino communities are emerging and growing at a steady pace, such as the region ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Private foundations, which currently on average give between 0% and 3% of their grant money to Latino nonprofits, can play a pivotal role in increasing the presence and capacity of grassroots, Latino-serving organizations in these areas."

-Brenda Muñiz, "In The Eye of the Storm: How The Government and Private Response to Hurricane Katrina Failed Latinos", 2006.

Center that offers free classes in job skills such as mold remediation, demolition and basic construction, as well as training for certified nurse and home health aides. After the first class, the "OSHA 10-hour" in basic safety, a spokesman for the Center said "the thirty graduates were snapped up by employers the next day."⁵⁹ **AFL-CIO** provided \$700 million for construction of apartments, hotels and hospitals, as well as home mortgages.

The **National Council of La Raza (NCLR)** has been one of the leading Hispanic organizations engaged in the reconstruction of New Orleans, with a particular emphasis on the need to provide services, support and information to Hispanics.⁶⁰ Given the increased demand for services from community-based organizations affiliated with NCLR in Katrina affected areas and in states that received large numbers of evacuees, La Raza

established the Katrina Relief Fund in order to support relief work and services for the affected population. Corporate and individual donors—including The McDonald's Corporation, Coors

Brewing Company, Travers Enterprises, Allstate, Time Warner, Citigroup, and Wal-Mart—donated more than \$200,000.⁶¹

The local media has also responded to the growth of the Hispanic population in New Orleans. **La Prensa**, a Spanish newspaper, is published twice a month⁶² and the **New Orleans Times-Picayune** runs an employment supplement in both Spanish and English.⁶³ **Radio Tropical** (1540 AM)—a Spanish-language radio station owned and managed by a Guatemalan immigrant, Ernesto Schweikert—“played a key role in disseminating news to the Hispanic community during and after Katrina.”⁶⁴ Only days after the hurricane, the station returned to the air to provide residents with information about family members and disaster relief assistance.⁶⁵

In December 2007, Schweikert became the general manager of KGLA-TV Channel 42, a Spanish-language channel launched by **Telemundo**.⁶⁶ **Telemundo** and **WYES TV** have also promoted English language training programs. **Cox Communications** hosts a popular TV show in Spanish: “De Todo un Poco”, which has dedicated various programs to information about health and safety issues in New Orleans.

“The media are a site of discourse and their representation of Latinos is politically significant. It is also an important influence on racial attitudes and therefore influences Latino migrants’ reception in New Orleans. Within the city, the media frame a context that can either promote or inhibit a positive reception for Latino migrants.”

-Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, “From ‘Gateway to the Americas’ to the ‘Chocolate City’: The Racialization of Latinos in New Orleans”, 2007.

“The growing Hispanic population in southeast Louisiana presents a unique and distinctive socio-economic challenge. As Hispanics move into the region in large numbers seeking economic opportunities, specific needs are emerging. A variety of work and social skills must be developed and nurtured. Business skills and guidance must be offered. These needs must be recognized and addressed to facilitate a holistic assimilation of a growing Hispanic population into southeast Louisiana and develop a strong and literate workforce.”

-Aristides R. Baraya, Michael Craig Budden, Luz M. Escobar, “Strategically Enhancing Business Capabilities and Social Development in the Hispanic Community”, 2007.

The availability of data is key for evaluating the progress of reconstruction, repopulation and economic recovery in New Orleans. It also helps track government agencies’ work and use of resources and identify the characteristics of the returning population and immigrant newcomers.

The Brookings Institution and the **Greater New Orleans Community Data Center** have made important contributions to monitoring the social and economic recovery in the Gulf Coast

through the “Katrina Index” begun in 2005, currently published quarterly as “The New Orleans Index”.⁶⁷ In 2006, the **Louisiana Public Health Institute** conducted a survey on behalf of the **Department of Health and Hospitals** with valuable information about the characteristics of the population in the areas affected by Katrina and Rita, including age, race, sex, health, income,

homeownership and education. Greg Rigamer, President of **GCR & Associates, Inc.**, a technology and urban planning consulting firm, has been one of the main sources for estimates on the repopulation of the city. GCR's calculations are based on the number of active utility accounts and use of power. Still, more data is needed to assess the size and characteristics of the Hispanic population in New Orleans as most of the existing estimates are informal.

State and Local Initiatives

Policy programs to support new immigrants have been a lower priority than reconstruction and rebuilding efforts. However, in order to develop successful and far-reaching policies, the characteristics of the Hispanic population need to be considered in the design and implementation of education and health care programs, housing and transportation infrastructure.

In addition, many Hispanics (including legal residents and citizens) report experiencing discrimination as a result of increased public attention to the debate over undocumented immigration and stepped-up enforcement measures. In the New Orleans area, the police have been accused of profiling the Hispanic population.⁶⁸ After Katrina, concerns about immigration among the native residents led to the revival of a law passed in 2002 that allows police to arrest people they suspect are undocumented. The police enforced this law more actively after Katrina and reportedly discriminated against Hispanics. In response to accusations from lawyers and civil rights groups, in February 2007, the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) issued a directive prohibiting officers from making arrests based on immigration status after a traffic violation.⁶⁹ The NOPD has also offered Spanish language courses to improve communication between police officers and non-English speaking Hispanics.⁷⁰

But concerns about undocumented immigration continue and in June 2008 two bills were introduced in the Louisiana Senate that ban the harboring of undocumented immigrants, require police to determine the status of detainees, and make it illegal to knowingly transport undocumented immigrants. Religious groups and community organizations that provide immigrant services oppose the bill, since they could be arrested for just doing their job.⁷¹ A bill pending in the House of Representatives in May 2008 would make it illegal to rent property to undocumented immigrants. Landlords would be required to check driver's licenses, voter registration cards or other proofs of residency or citizenship before renting properties.⁷²

These two competing pressures—the need for labor and the social and political immigrant-related tensions—highlight the importance of private sector engagement and the need to support Hispanic employees through initiatives that promote their integration, both at the workplace and in their communities.

In contrast to these restrictive initiatives, the City of New Orleans has developed various initiatives to support its workforce. The Office of Workforce Development, established in 2003, provides job training and job placement services through work centers. Since Katrina, the office has increased its efforts to reach out to the Hispanic community. **In March 2007, Mayor C. Ray Nagin announced the launch of the “JOB1 Career Solutions Mobile Unit,” developed by the Office of Workforce Development and the organization Louisiana Works.** JOB1 is a “rolling career center and training facility” that goes to different areas to help citizens register for its job training programs.⁷³

Hispanics have reported experiencing discrimination when searching for homes to rent or purchase in New Orleans.⁷⁴ This is consistent with national trends. In 2007, a national Pew Hispanic Center survey reported that as a result of the current climate, 41 percent of Hispanics said they, a family member or a close friend had experienced discrimination in the past five years. Between 10 percent and 25 percent of Hispanics report having more trouble securing a job, and finding or keeping housing. They also mention that they have been asked to produce documents to prove immigration status more often than in the past, and that they are now less likely to use government services and travel abroad. More than half of Hispanics (54 percent) say discrimination is keeping them from succeeding in the United States.⁷⁵

These two competing pressures—the need for labor and the state’s rising social and political immigrant-related tensions—highlight the importance of private sector engagement and the need to support Hispanic employees through initiatives that promote their integration, both at the workplace and in their communities.

VII. The Role of the Private Sector

Hispanics have become a significant component of American society and a key factor of growth and productivity. In order to maximize the benefits and potential of a dynamic and growing immigrant population, and minimize any costs implied, it is necessary for the public and private sectors to provide opportunities for their full economic, social and political integration.

“By 2050, 25 percent of Americans will be Hispanic, and if they're not fully integrated—fully productive, each living up to his or her full potential, fully secure in a sense of belonging, fully loyal—we as a nation will be in trouble”.

-Tamar Jacoby, “Assimilation Keys,” *New York Post*, July 8, 2007.

With limited funding for federal programs supporting immigrant integration and no comprehensive strategy to address this issue,⁷⁶ public-private initiatives are even more imperative. Many state initiatives (including health, education, English acquisition, citizenship training, documentation programs and city or state offices dedicated to immigrant affairs) are successfully implemented as a collaborative effort with community organizations and other institutions. However, the projects are generally insufficient in resources and scope and are not widespread across the country. Thus, employers, community groups, religious organizations, immigrant advocates and civil society play a crucial role in supplementing services and opportunities necessary for the successful integration of the foreign-born population.

For employers of Hispanics, integration of the foreign-born contributes to increased worker productivity and job stability. **Company sponsored initiatives can help increase worker loyalty and minimize turnover. At the same time, a more integrated workforce can reduce social tensions, both in and outside of the workplace. Providing the tools for integration also builds social capital, opens opportunities for upward mobility, and increases immigrants’ income and purchasing power, which is injected back into the economy.**

- Increasing immigrants’ **access to education, skills development** and improving **English proficiency** strengthens their position in the community and promotes **participation**, diminishing isolation and discrimination. Moreover, it increases opportunities for **upward mobility** in the second and third generations.
- Improving immigrants’ financial literacy opens the door for **access to banking services, credit, mortgages and loans**, which in the long-term allows them to support children’s college education, make investments or purchase a home—a sign of stability and long-term commitment to both their communities and jobs.

- Facilitating **access to health care** increases productivity and reduces the high costs associated with emergency room use by the uninsured. At the same time, the country's overall quality of health is improved.
- Providing information about **naturalization** and **civic participation** can encourage political participation, promote civic values, and reinforce immigrants' desire and commitment to become English language proficient and root themselves in the fabric of communities.

"...we realized that...in order for this area to rebuild, it would be necessary to have a literate, assimilated and trained workforce. And so we needed to be able to provide services to accomplish that end."

-Darlene Kattan, Executive Director of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana, quoted by Elizabeth Fussell, forthcoming 2008.

Business Best Practices

The AS/COA *Hispanic Integration Initiative* has identified examples of corporations in key sectors of the U.S. economy that promote the integration of Hispanic immigrants. Best practices are catalogued by type of activity:

● English Language Programs

Many companies recognize that investing in training and promoting the social and economic integration of the Hispanic workforce is beneficial. Employer training services, such as English language classes, foster a better work environment, allow for the provision of better services and increase productivity. Noteworthy examples of companies in the U.S. that promote English acquisition are **Miller and Long, Tecta America Corporation, Western Union, Norsan Group, Chick-Fil-A** and **Shaw Industries**. A number of companies in New Orleans are also supporting English-language programs:

- In 2006, **Capital One** donated \$50,000 to Catholic Charities for the reopening of *El Yo Yo Head Start*, a bilingual center in the Uptown section of New Orleans, as well as for other health care and social services for the Hispanic community.⁷⁷
- **Telemundo** and **WYES TV** have also promoted English language training programs, focusing particularly on Hispanic workers in the construction industry.

BEST PRACTICES: SESAME WORKSHOP'S HISPANIC STRATEGY PROJECT

Based on findings of a March 2007 Advisory meeting with Hispanic education experts, Sesame Workshop developed a wide range of programs, books, magazines, interactive media, online sources, DVD's as well as teacher and parenting resources, that emphasize education and language training for Hispanic children at an early age, with a bilingual focus. Sesame's materials also seek to engage the entire family and provide parents with the necessary tools to set the foundations for Hispanic children's learning process.

- **Bilingual Programs:** Sesame highlights "bilingual language learning" as an asset through programs that introduce English and Spanish simultaneously. Through TV programming and published materials such as *"What's the Word on the Street"*, Sesame provides opportunities for Latino children to learn words in English and in Spanish in familiar contexts, and offers resources for teachers and parents to promote vocabulary development in both languages.
- **Outreach Materials:** Workshop outreach projects, publications and TV shows such as *"Happy, Healthy, Ready for School: Learning is Everywhere"*, *"Healthy Habits for Life"* and *"Lead Away"* have content in English and Spanish, and use Hispanic characters and culturally relevant contexts in order to draw in Hispanic children. Sesame also sees these resources and tools as a way to help parents and caregivers increase the quality of educational experiences for Hispanic children and participate in their learning process.
- **Children as Global Citizens:** The *Worldwide Kids Initiative* aims to prepare children for meeting the demands of an increasingly interconnected world and learn about cultural, language and religious differences.

Support: These programs are funded by McDonald's Corporation, Merrill Lynch, PNC Financial Services Group among other companies and organizations.

● **Scholarships**

Many major U.S. corporations support scholarship programs for Hispanics as a means to promote upward mobility. These types of programs address one of the main obstacles for Hispanic immigrants' access to higher education—the lack of financial resources.

"By improving education for Latinos and other groups who are also placed at risk of dropping out of school, researching best practices, tutoring, and other initiatives, we improve the workforce for business and industry as well as contribute to forging leadership in pursuing productive activities and businesses."

-Pedro R. Portes, The Goizueta Foundation Distinguished Chair in Latino Teacher Education and CLASE Executive Director, May 2008.

● **Google, Marriott, Verizon,**

Sodexo, Denny's, MasterCard, Ford, Hilton, Ernst & Young, M & T Bank and Kaiser Permanente are among the main sponsors of the Hispanic College Fund (HCF). Founded by a group of Hispanic business leaders, the Hispanic College Fund provides Hispanic students in financial need with an opportunity to pursue a college degree. HCF awards over \$2 million every year to over 600 students with a view toward educating and developing the next generation of Hispanic professionals.⁷⁸

● **Citigroup, FedEx, UPS, Morgan Stanley, Time Warner, Bank of America, HSBC Bank, Nissan North America, Ford, IDT, State Farm Mutual Automotive Insurance, Wachovia Corporation, Wells Fargo, Shell Oil, Exxon Mobil, Hewlett Packard, Procter & Gamble, Target, Toyota, General Motors, Coca-Cola, Univision, CBS Broadcasting, Inc., ING, Verizon, Mazda, McDonald's, Wal-Mart and Pfizer Pharmaceuticals** are among the main sponsors of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF).⁷⁹ HSF is the largest national program that provides funding and educational outreach for Hispanic students. With their support, in the past 32 years the Hispanic Scholarship Fund has awarded more than 82,000 scholarships worth \$221 million to Hispanics from all 50 states in nearly 2,000 colleges and universities.

● **Financial Literacy**

Recognizing the growing purchasing power of Hispanics and the remittances sent home (Latin America and the Caribbean received more than \$68 billion in 2006⁸⁰), many banks are increasingly reaching out to this population and facilitating access to services. A telling fact is that between 2002 and 2006, more than 400 financial institutions began

"If immigrants start using banks, they could feasibly start saving money, establish credit, and eventually obtain a mortgage to buy a home... Immigrants might also invest their money, putting it toward education for a child or themselves. I don't imagine that this type of thing would happen en masse, but you can certainly imagine where one area of assimilation can affect others."

- Tomas R. Jimenez, *Christian Science Monitor*, January 26, 2006.

accepting Consular IDs issued by other countries for bank transactions.⁸¹

Beyond the interest in increasing their customer base, banks can play an important role in fostering economic and social integration by offering bilingual services and easing immigrants' access to credit and savings. When immigrants start using banks, the possibilities are increased for saving money, establishing a credit history, obtaining mortgages or loans, and investing or establishing a fund for their children's education or for retirement.⁸² Access to banks also

reduces vulnerability to crime and increases community safety, as they are able to deposit cash in an account instead of carrying it.⁸³ **Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citizens Home Loan, Inc., Wachovia Corporation, and Western Union** are some noteworthy examples of financial institutions promoting these types of initiatives at the national level.

- In Louisiana, the non-profit group Louisiana Appleseed launched the Financial Access Program to provide free financial classes for immigrants and disseminate information about local banks and financial institutions such as **IberiaBank, The Greater New Orleans Federal Credit Union, Capital One Bank, Fidelity Homestead Savings Bank of New Orleans, and Omni Bank** that offer bilingual services and easier access to bank accounts and credit for the immigrant community.⁸⁴ For example, **The Greater New Orleans Federal Credit Union** promotes the use of tax identification numbers as an alternative to a Social Security number for its "safe accounts" program.⁸⁵

"We have targeted the Hispanic population by hiring bilingual employees at our branches and running ads on the Hispanic radio station and in the newspaper and sponsoring some of their events".

-Boyd Boudreaux, president and CEO of Fidelity, Fidelity Homestead Savings Bank of New Orleans, *The Times Picayune*, September 9, 2007.

- **ASI Federal Credit Union** is a nonprofit agency working in the New Orleans area that has served low-income communities for 47 years. In response to the growth of Hispanics in New Orleans, ASI is planning to open an "all Latino" branch in 2008. This branch will have bilingual staff and all documents and materials will be available in English and in Spanish. All its branches currently offer Hispanic workers "safe" savings accounts and ATM cards that can also be used by families in the home country. The main goal is to help immigrants save money, keep it safe and build a credit history. By February 2008 ASI had opened 100 "safe" accounts.⁸⁶ ASI is also helping immigrants apply for federal tax ID numbers so they can start paying taxes and open interest accounts. The "all Latino" credit union in New Orleans will have an office dedicated to helping immigrants obtain ITIN numbers.

"We are a multicultural credit union that serves low-income communities with the goal of creating economic empowerment. Reaching out to Hispanics is part of our mission. Given the growth of Hispanic immigrants in our community, particularly after Katrina, we have increased our efforts to provide financial access and support to this underserved community".

-Mignhon Tourne, CEO, ASI Federal Credit Union, June 2008.

In addition, ASI has established partnerships with Puentes, the Hispanic Apostolate and Catholic Charities, the Esperanza Charter School and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Together with Puentes, it is working to encourage Hispanic immigrants to register to vote. ASI is also planning to offer financial education programs for young adults and their parents in partnership with the Esperanza Charter School—whose students are 50 percent Latino.

In early 2008, ASI opened the Clifford N. Rosenthal Community Center to promote access to local financial institutions, affordable housing, entrepreneurship and other services for Hispanics and other underserved groups in New Orleans.⁸⁷ According to the vice president of the Louisiana Credit Union League, ASI has broken new ground in the state with its "safe" accounts program and has reached out to the

Hispanic community with more impact than the other 200 or more credit unions in Louisiana.⁸⁸

- **Deutsche Bank America, ASI Federal Credit Union and Capital One Bank** are among some of the financial institutions that support community organizations in New Orleans focusing on services for Hispanics.

BEST PRACTICES: WESTERN UNION

Western Union has focused on issues of immigrant integration for many years and one of its primary goals is to promote education as a tool for economic empowerment. Programs center on scholarships, skills development and financial literacy. Its most recent initiative, *Our World, Our Family*, is a \$50 million, five-year program that includes four components: *Our World Gives*, *Our World Leans*, *Our World Strives*, and *Our World Speaks*.

- Launched in 2008, *Our World Learns* offers family scholarships that promote inter-generational learning. Each scholarship supports two or more family members such as a child and a parent. For example, the child may receive a scholarship to attend college or technical school, while the parent is offered the opportunity to enroll in ESL courses or vocational training. The idea is to promote the entire family's integration process and provide tools for upward mobility, while improving the children's learning environment at home.
- *Our World Strives* focuses on asset building and entrepreneurial training through the National Hispanic Business Information Clearinghouse (NHBIC) (www.nhbic.org). After being started with Western Union funds, NHBIC is now an independent organization with a business development training program that helps Hispanics develop and start small businesses. Its main focus is to help Hispanics build assets and wealth by offering instruction on items such as how to create marketing programs, pay taxes, apply for licenses, and receive certification. In addition, Western Union has launched a micro-mentor program with Mercy Corps that develops partnerships between company employees and individuals that seek to develop small businesses.
- Western Union's emphasis on the need to foster a better understanding of immigrants' economic contributions and promote their integration is also developed through research and working groups. As part of the *Our World Speaks* campaign, Western Union seeks to develop unbiased research and share findings on the benefits of immigration for host countries, such as the United States.
- Between 2002 and 2007, the Western Union Foundation donated \$1 million to Jobs for Americans Graduates, (<http://www.jag.org/>) an organization that provides higher education scholarships for students around the country that are at a high risk of dropping out of school. Western Union's donations supported nearly 900 scholarships for students, predominantly Hispanic, who are the first in their family to go to college.
- In 2007, as part of a partnership with Jobs for Americas Graduates, Western Union launched a financial literacy curriculum to train and empower students. The program addresses basic information such as how to open a bank account, build credit, manage savings, pay taxes, and other useful tools that prepare young adults to fully engage in the financial system. Financial specialists use a Western Union handbook to teach the for-credit courses to high school students both nationally but with a specific focus on border states. An adult curriculum is being developed.
- In addition, Western Union promotes economic development in migrant-sending countries. Through the Four Plus One program, Western Union matches funds provided by migrant hometown associations in the U.S. for development projects that help create jobs in high-emigration communities in Mexico. These donations are matched as well by the Mexican

● Skills Development

Another way to provide opportunities for upward mobility is to offer skill development and managerial training programs. This type of instruction provides the Hispanic workforce with increased opportunities to perform well and gain access to better jobs. **Georgia Power, Intercontinental Hotels Group, and Western Union** are among companies in the U.S. that focus on the development of life and work skills among Hispanic workers. In New Orleans, job placement support and access to housing are key areas in which private sector support is essential.

- Recognizing the importance of skill and language development, **Northrop Grumman**, a shipbuilding company in New Orleans, provides on-site training programs in both Spanish and English on how to build ships. Their “Command Spanish” program is offered to ship construction management and focuses on shipbuilding terms in Spanish. The company also provides safety orientation materials in Spanish and recently acquired translation software for foremen-hand-held devices. Employees also receive “Spanish in a Pinch” trade-specific translation cards. ESL courses are available for employees after hours. As part of Northrop Grumman’s emphasis on language skills, it has developed an employee compensation model as well as language skills testing and certification. These programs are fully funded by the company and are offered as continuing education at various skill levels

- Similarly, the **Homebuilders’ Association of New Orleans** sponsors basic construction skills and safety training in Spanish.

- In the aftermath of Katrina, the **Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana (HCCL)** partnered with The Hispanic Apostolate Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, The Jefferson Parish School System, and Southeastern Louisiana University to address the pressing needs of Hispanic families and businesses.

"The National Hispanic Business Information Clearing House (NHBIC) and subsequent clearinghouses go to the core of helping diverse individuals and communities around the world realize their potential and improve their futures through business innovation, education and training. We share [the] goal of empowering Mexican immigrants and other populations with the tools and knowledge to succeed."

-Michael L. Barrera, president of the NHBIC, *Reuters*, April 24, 2008.

In March 2006, they established the **Hispanic Business Resources and Technology Center (HBRTC)** in Jefferson Parish. It is the first of its kind in Louisiana, with seed monies from the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the AT&T Foundation.

The HBRTC was originally designed as a business incubator and technology center for Hispanics. However, given the situation in the region and the needs of the community, the organization provides more comprehensive business assistance, educational opportunities, English and Spanish language classes, computer classes, and social services. All the programs are bilingual and culturally sensitive.

Through its partnership with the Hispanic Apostolate, the Center assists Hispanics with job placement, educational programs, emergency assistance, immigration services, counseling, workers' rights workshops, medical assistance through the Latino Health Access Network, and citizenship classes. Meanwhile, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana offers workshops for business

start-up and business mentoring, youth mentoring, networking, and business development opportunities. It also conducts surveys to report on business needs and represents the Hispanic business community in seeking government and private cooperation for the benefit of Hispanic businesses and families. The Jefferson Parish School System (JPSS) has provided the space for the HBRTC at the Theodore Roosevelt Middle School in Kenner, including computer labs, a business conference room, a social service room, and ESL and citizenship classrooms. Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) provides instructors for business development workshops and seminars; it offers grant writing assistance and research support related to Hispanics in Louisiana, and helps with the management of the Center.

*"The **Hispanic Business Resources and Technology Center** is expected to positively impact the local and regional community by providing resources to help the Hispanic community recover from Hurricane Katrina and provide direction and guidance for Hispanic migration to the region. It will also provide for the assimilation needs of new Hispanic workers, as they potentially become new residents and contributors to the region's economy. Because any entity providing services in the New Orleans area would need to consider family as well as business needs, the philosophical approach of the Hispanic Business Resources and Technology Center is holistic in nature, requiring equal components of business and educational development, technological training and social services."*

-Aristides R. Baraya, Michael Craig Budden, Luz M. Escobar, "Strategically Enhancing Business Capabilities and Social Development in the Hispanic Community", 2007.

In addition to these partnerships, sponsorship for the Center is provided by Toyota, the USHCC Foundation, National Council of La Raza, Entergy, Cox Communications, Bellsouth Real Yellow Pages, Inter-American Development Bank, Prudential Foundation, Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market, Verizon Wireless, New Beginnings. Support is also provided by Tulane University, the University of New Orleans, the Louisiana Small Business Development Center, Louisiana International Trade Center, American Red Cross, State Farm Insurance, St. Charles Community Health Care Center, FEMA and SPA, and Mauricio Trujillo Constructions. In April 2006, the four founding partners of the Center (the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana (HCCL), The Hispanic Apostolate Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, The Jefferson Parish School System, and Southeastern Louisiana University) received the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation President's Award for their successful efforts to establish a capacity building institution and leadership for Hispanic businesses.⁸⁹

- **Harrah's Casino Hotels**, in New Orleans, provides its Hispanic employees with broad support beginning with the job application process, where Spanish language interpreters are available. At the workplace, employees receive information about education opportunities for their children and they can apply for childcare assistance (if their salary is below \$35,000 a year). Considering infrastructure and transportation limitations in the city, Harrah's provides half-priced bus tickets to employees. It has also supported housing programs for the Hispanic community by organizing housing fairs. The casino has an on-site health clinic that charges a small fee. In partnership with the Louisiana Minority Business Council, Harrah's supports certification of Hispanic businesses and organizations. Additionally, in 2007, it donated \$50,000 to Carnival Latino, an event celebrating Hispanic culture and heritage.
- **Shell Oil** has developed the Shell Hispanic Employee Network (SHEN), which provides support in rebuilding efforts. Shell's Ambassador Grant Program provides a one-time \$1,000 grant to any organization a Shell employee helps rebuild.⁹⁰ As part of these programs they promote youth leadership and teach small businesses how to obtain certification.

● Access to Health

As documented above, one of the current challenges in New Orleans is the development of health infrastructure. Vulnerable populations, such as Hispanics, are at risk given the unsanitary conditions in which they perform certain jobs, their lack of insurance and their limited access to health care. Furthermore, language and cultural barriers limit immigrants' ability to obtain appropriate care. At the national level, **Johnson & Johnson** and **Pfizer** are reaching out to Hispanic customers. Below are companies that are doing this in New Orleans:

- **Ochsner Health System** is a non-profit, academic, multi-specialty health care delivery system that has grown to be the largest health care delivery system in the New Orleans region. It has over 10,000 employees, including 600 physicians in 80 medical specialties and subspecialties. After Katrina, it was the only health care organization still set up and running at full capacity. In order to better serve the Hispanic population, Ochsner has developed various programs, focusing primarily on language facilitation and preventive health care. Recognizing that language barriers make patient understanding and compliance difficult, Ochsner offers Spanish language classes for employees. Some of the courses are designed especially for the medical staff. Ochsner also provides patient handbooks and admission papers in Spanish and has an interpreter program running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Through the Kenner Medical Center, Ochsner runs a Spanish-language program for expectant mothers. Ochsner has also actively recruited Spanish-speaking physicians and nurses to facilitate communication with patients.

"There is a waiting list for staff that is interested in the Spanish language courses. I like that. It means people realize there's a need for better communication with the Hispanic community."

-Dr. Ana M. Hands, Director of International Health Services, Ochsner Health System.

In addition to addressing the language barrier, Ochsner has emphasized the need for preventive health care within the Hispanic community. These initiatives diminish the frequency of expensive visits to emergency rooms, lower overall hospital expenditures, and maintain a better standard of health for the larger community. Through health fairs, TV programs and radio ads, Ochsner has made itself visible to the community, giving them more confidence to contact the physicians and staff. For example, Ochsner partnered with **Telemundo** to develop a preventive health care T.V. program. They are also planning to launch a live program in Spanish where people can call in with health-related questions. In the next months, it will launch a Spanish version of its website.

① **Information on Citizenship and Civic Participation**

In 2006, 47.2 percent of the foreign-born in Louisiana were naturalized citizens. One of the main obstacles for immigrant naturalization is the lack of accessible information about requirements and limited government assistance throughout the process. Eligible immigrants' limited English proficiency and low levels of education further complicates this process.⁹¹ The cost of the application, which increased to \$675 in July of 2007, serves as an additional disincentive. Through the initiative "Winning Together", **Harrah's Casino Hotels** promotes voter registration and information on elections. Nationally, **Telemundo**, **mun2** and **Univision** are working on initiatives related to Hispanic civic participation.

VIII. Moving Forward

These companies are making headway toward facilitating the process of integration for Hispanic immigrants and other groups. Efforts to promote the integration of immigrant workforce increase business competitiveness through a better trained, stable and loyal workforce that takes pride in its work and has the experience and training required to move up the professional ladder. Through these practices, employers also promote social cohesion in and outside the workplace and improve working conditions, all of which contributes to maximizing business productivity. Yet, there is much more to be done.

Through the *Hispanic Integration Initiative*, AS/COA offers a non-partisan forum for companies to share their best practices and obtain information about successful initiatives adopted in related industries. This provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring together companies that recognize their responsibility in promoting the full integration of the country's Hispanic population. The business practices highlighted through this project not only exemplify the social responsibility of the business community but also demonstrate the positive results of Hispanic integration for companies and for the U.S. economy and society in general.

ENDNOTES

* The U.S. Census Bureau uses the terms Hispanic/Latino to identify persons who indicate that their origin is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American, or some other Spanish origin, regardless of race.

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³ Bruce Egger, "Population growth has hit brakes of late", *The Times Picayune*, March 1, 2008.

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