



**Investing in Our Future:  
The State of Latino Children  
and Youth**

TRANSCRIPT

**NCLR**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country and has regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, and San Antonio.

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## Acknowledgments

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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Welcome and Introductory Remarks .....   | 1  |
| Latino Children in the U.S.: From Numbers to Stories .....                                 | 13 |
| Environmental Factors Affecting the Well-being of Latino Children: Health and Poverty..... | 21 |
| Luncheon Speakers .....  | 33 |
| Opportunities and Threats to Our Children's Future: Education and Juvenile Justice .....   | 49 |
| Wrap-Up .....  | 60 |



## Welcome and Introductory Remarks

### Janet Murguía, President and CEO National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

Good morning. How's everybody doing? Welcome. This is terrific. We are so excited to have you here. This is a very special day for us at NCLR, and I hope for you all, as we bring together quite a collective of stakeholders who have been invested in the future of our children and in the future of Latino children.

For us, today launches I think a day that we'll be able to look back on in history and say, you know, today we created a very important roadmap for how we're going to invest in our children's future as we move forward, so we are very excited to have you all here today.

I want to personally welcome you on behalf of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and our Board—some of our Board members are here. You're going to be hearing from some of them—Juan Sánchez, who's an expert in the field of juvenile justice and prevention. I know he's here. Other members of our Board I think are going to be in and out throughout the day.

We're so pleased to have the support of our NCLR Board and also some from our Affiliate [Network], almost 300 community-based organizations that serve families and Latino families every day. They serve as really the heart and soul of our network, and we're so pleased that many of them are represented here today.

But an event like this just simply wouldn't be possible without the sponsors, and the two key sponsors today are two wonderful foundations that I think have seen the importance of our Latino community and are investing in that future here today, and that is The Atlantic Philanthropies and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Can we thank them? Because I know that this is something.

NCLR conceived of this event after we realized that at the end of the day every challenge we face and every opportunity we have is really about children. We, I think, will learn about the different areas in the lives of children that are impacted and what we can do to help address them.

When people lose their homes, children lose their foundation in life. When immigrant raids happen, it's children who are left behind. When we don't address the issue of access to health care, children simply don't get the help they need and it affects every other part of their life. And when we only focus on cracking down on crime rather than on finding the solutions and the prevention approaches that we know can work, we stand to lose an entire generation. And when we don't deal with the growing issue of poverty or invest in education from preschool to college, our children's future becomes unnecessarily and tragically limited.

We know that right now—and we'll focus on today—that we are at a crossroads when it comes to our nation's future, but in particular to our children and our Latino kids. Twenty percent of Latino children lack health care. Only 55% of Latino high school students are expected to graduate on time. Nearly 18,000 Latino youth are in jail, many in adult prisons. And 400,000 Latinos this year will lose their homes. What does that mean for the children in those homes? And what are we doing to look out for how we can support them through these types of challenges?

But this forum should not just be of interest to Latino community but to everyone in our country. Latino children are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population. More than one in five



children are Latino, and that's expected to be one in three in the very near future. More than 90% of these kids are native-born U.S. citizens. I mention that because many in this debate would like to sort of blur the lines and somehow think—and may suggest that somehow none are native-born U.S.—non-native-born children somehow are less deserving. We want to make sure that people know that we are talking about native-born children here, the 90% here in this country.

Latino children are our future workforce. They're our future leaders, our future contributors, our future consumers. They are the future of this country, and if they succeed we all succeed. If they fail we all fail. These are our challenges and our opportunities.

Your challenge here today is that we will ask you, as we present new research about the status of the future of Latino children in the areas of education, health, immigration, housing, juvenile justice, and poverty, to help in laying the foundation for a comprehensive agenda that will move the needle, that will impact in a positive way Latino children and youth, nurture their enormous potential, and create a better future for them and, ultimately, for our country.

That's what today is about. You get a chance to be part of laying that foundation, of how we are going to not only assess this information, but lay it out there that we can have an agenda. Ultimately, that will help us change the lives of these kids for the better and to help create the best opportunity for our country to leverage the incredible potential that these children have to offer.

But it won't happen without serious thought, without a lot of hard work, and without the collective knowledge that you all present here today.

This is very exciting. There's not been a gathering such as this with the stakeholders who are represented here today that are going to look at all of these issues and say, "We're going to take this collective knowledge, lay it out there, put together an agenda that will help us then move across the country to advance that agenda and ultimately the changes that we need to see in Congress and as we change policy across the country."

You know, I'm really pleased that one important element of today's forum, is the fact that we have young people here. We're talking about young people. You're going to see young people as part of this effort. And we have Latino youth.

NCLR has been proud to have as a component of its work a leadership initiative that helps Latino youth gain and enhance their leadership skills by providing learning opportunities locally and, of course, at our Annual Conference. It becomes quite an event. This morning some of our leaders as well as our youth are joining us, and they represent the thousands of youth who cannot be present here today but on whose behalf we are working here today. So today we commit ourselves to them and to all the Latino children to ensure that all have access to quality affordable health care, graduate from high school prepared to enter college, are able to access the country's safety net regardless of their parents' status, do not have to engage with juvenile justice system, but if it happens to make sure that it is only once and that we're giving them every chance to succeed and to come home to a house their parents own and will not lose to foreclosure.

Simply put, what today is about—today we are launching really that vision for the American Dream that we hold dear as a hope for all of us and for the future of our kids. Today, the opportunity to claim the piece of the American Dream for our Latino kids is what's at stake, and that's what you're going to be doing today. You're going to be helping craft that roadmap to the American Dream for our Latino children and our youth.

I can't think of a more exciting thing to be a part of, of a more impactful thing to be part of in the midst of this great city—our nation's capital where so much is going on. It's all important work—but today



we're part of charting the course for the future of our children and our Latino kids. We are very, very proud and pleased to have you all here today.

So I want to encourage you to get to work and to really use your experience, your background, and put it together here. But know that this is just the beginning. We will be launching steps and action plans that then we can take and move forward. When we reconvene again, I want to make sure that we have really put together the plan that we know will advance not only our community but also our country.

This is very exciting. And I'm pleased that in addition to the stakeholders that we have represented here today, we have some incredible leaders here representing so many of the interests of this country and our community.

I'm pleased to introduce to you someone who I happen to know as a very dear friend, someone who hails from my home state, a former governor of the state of Kansas and now our Secretary of Health and Human Services. She's been very invested in making sure that, as we move forward on health care reform and on so many issues affecting our community, the voice of our community, the Latino community, is heard.

I remember on the first day that she was sworn into office, she called me and she said, "Janet, you know, I'm not going to be able to do this alone. What you all are doing at NCLR and what the Latino community represents is so important for me and for my department to be successful. I want to know and I want to hear from you." And she has been true to her word.

At every point where they have convened summits to deal with the flu outbreak or any other issue, we have been at the table. This is someone who is not only our partner, but our friend. I'm so pleased that you're going to have a chance to hear from someone who has had a distinguished career in politics and public service, but today we're going to hear from someone who is a visionary leader and a friend of our Latino community. Please join me in welcoming the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius.

## **Hon. Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary** **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Good morning. Good morning. *Buenos días*. Nice to be with all of you and nice to be with my great friend, Janet Murguía. I have a little bit of bias I have to confess to Senator Menendez for women who run things. So you have chosen wisely in a great new leader. And I also like a Kansas girl who still wears her ruby slippers on a regular basis.

It's great to have a chance to be with you this morning and to join this very important meeting that NCLR has convened. I want to thank all of you for being here. And thank really NCLR and the leadership Board for the incredible work you've done over the last four decades on housing and education, on social justice, and the fight for opportunity for all Americans. It has made a real difference not only for Latinos but for America. It makes us stronger and more prosperous, and I think you all should be very proud of that work. But also convening the summit today and focusing on the young generation is so critically important.

Atlantic Philanthropies and the Kellogg Foundation should be again thanked for supporting this important initiative.

*Los niños son el futuro.* Our children are our future. That is easy to say but it's time to not only talk the talk but walk the walk. We need to really focus on what's happening with children across America. As Janet has said, what's happening with Latino children is what's happening to America's children. This is about the prosperity of our country in the future. As Latino children prosper, so our country will prosper. The kinds of focuses that you're going to talk about today and the kinds of priorities that we set in this country really will determine the future for America.

President Obama understands this. I think it's no better time to focus on a discussion about the future than with this new administration and new president to help set those priorities.

You know, I work in a building named after Hubert Humphrey. The HHS office building at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Independence right down the hill from the Capitol is the Hubert H. Humphrey Building. We have a slogan that hangs over the door that is a quote from Humphrey that says, "The moral test of a government is how that government treats those in the dawn of life, the children." I see that every day when I walk in the door. That's really, I think, a great motto for the mission of our agency.

It is a mission that we take very seriously and so I'm delighted that Janet invited me to come and talk to you a little bit today about some of those priority areas. We want your input and your involvement and want you to not only be aware of the initiatives under way, but some of the plans for the future.

Early education is part of our agency's mission, and what we know over years of studies is that the single best determinant of whether a child will succeed is whether he or she was in a high-quality early education program. It not only determines success in school, high school, college, and beyond, but it also is a great factor to look at whether that individual is likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system, whether they're going to end up in prison, whether they're going to end up with drug use.

No other factor has as much impact on a child's life when you measure various aspects than early childhood education. We know that kids, too many kids, arrive in kindergarten already so far behind they will never catch up. And if they don't catch up in kindergarten, they're not going to graduate from high school. If they don't graduate from high school, they're not going to go to college, and their families will feel that impact for the rest of their lives.

The investment that Congress, thanks to Senator Menendez and his colleagues, made in the Recovery Act in early childhood education is unprecedented—doubling Early Head Start, adding significant resources to Head Start. Now there's a follow-up move called the Early Learning Challenge Fund that has now passed the House and is headed for the Senate, and it really is the component piece.

One is to invest resources. The other is to make sure that the programs are quality programs, that they're curriculum-based, that parents have an opportunity to know that if they send their child to an early program that there is a learning component of that program, that there are standards that are set. The Early Learning Challenge grants put investments in states and helps lift all programs to a quality standard, and that is a critical piece of the puzzle and one that will be so very important. This could make a lifetime of difference in the children of this generation, making sure that there is more access to quality early childhood and making sure that the programs are lifted to the point that we can all have those kinds of programs for all the children in America.

Health insurance—Janet has mentioned the critical importance. You can't learn if you're not healthy. You can't be successful if you're sick each and every day, and children particularly feel the brunt of that. Illness doesn't make them able to be good students or productive students.

So, again, in the Recovery Act, a massive expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program that has been twice vetoed in the previous administration, was the second bill that President Obama signed and a big step forward—four million additional children across this country.

As important as adding children was also eliminating what had been an enormous barrier, a five-year barrier to those mothers and kids legally in this country who could not participate in the Children's Health Insurance Program. That is no longer in place, and that is a huge step forward for a lot of legal residents in this country and particularly impacts thousands and millions of Latino families.

Children also need health insurance, so it's part of the CHIP reauthorization that there is an aggressive outreach program. We know that lots of families qualify who are not signed up, so part of the resources are really directed toward outreach, figuring out strategies and ways to reach into communities.

Groups like the South End Community Health Center in Boston who's running a very innovative strategy to sign up Medicaid and CHIP enrollees in Latino neighborhoods—recognizing that there are lots of eligible folks, but unless they are encouraged to join and sought out they won't take advantage of the benefits available to them. That's going on across the country and that's very good news.

Insurance doesn't get you much though if you don't have access to a doctor. You can have a card, but if you don't have a provider that will either take your card or who has some cultural competency—a lot of barriers exist in terms of not only language barriers but community comfort barriers.

Part of the investment in the Recovery Act is to diversify the medical workforce, not just doctors, not just reaching into underserved communities to try and provide scholarships for more kids to go to medical school and serve in underserved communities.

That's a piece of the puzzle. But we need nurse practitioners. We need mental health technicians. We need social workers and outreach workers. Again, it is part of the Recovery Act to recognize that not only do we need more health care workers, we need to diversify the health care workforce.

It's an area that Janet and I have talked about that we take very seriously. We want your help and support in identifying folks who are interested in helping us look at the kinds of gaps that currently exist in the health care—the health disparities which are really alarming.

Health and Human Services has done a good job publishing reports year after year. We haven't done a very good job closing those gaps. It's something that I want to commit to you as the new Secretary of Health and Human Services—I take it very seriously and we're going to be reaching back and asking for your help and support.

Finally, there's a little debate going on in Washington. I don't know if you've heard about it, but health reform. Some people are talking about the fact that after 70 years it's finally time to make sure that everyone in America has access to affordable health care. It's finally time in this country to close the gap. It's finally time to make sure that the dollars we're spending deliver high-quality health care for everyone, and we need your help. We need your involvement.

That debate is under way. It's come further than ever before in the history of this country, and that's why the fights are getting more ferocious, frankly. If we weren't this close to victory, people would be talking about something else.

But there are a lot of people invested in the status quo. They think it's just fine, thank you very much. It's doing well by them and their families, or their companies are making a lot of money or the insurance industry has a lockdown. It's easier to insure people, frankly, who promise not to get sick and to be able to kick people out once they get sick.

This is a system that needs to change. That is a commitment that is working its way through the process, and we need your help and we need your voices to make sure we get a bill on President

Obama's desk this year that he can sign and make a change in this country that we have been waiting for decades. So can I have your help and support in doing that?

Finally, I just want to mention one of the urgent health challenges that's facing our country, which is the H1N1 virus. And what we know about this virus is that it spreads quickly. We know it targets younger Americans. The hospitalizations and deaths have been predominantly in younger Americans. This is a children's flu. Kids have no immunity to it.

The good news is we have a vaccine. We have a vaccine that works. We know we've got the right virus. We know we've got the right target. The vaccine is becoming available a little more slowly than we would have liked, but when we started this process six months ago, we didn't know if we could get a vaccine that would be a target. We thought, at that point, everybody would need two rounds of shots. We know that if you're ten years old and older one shot will do. It's good in eight days.

It is free. The government—Senator Menendez and his colleagues were wise to step up and say, we want to make sure Americans are safe and secure. They have provided funds that are going into the purchase of vaccine. A lot of schools will be holding vaccination clinics. We have partners at community levels and with groups across the country. We need you to help get the word out of how important this is.

There won't be—you don't have to present insurance cards or forms in order to take advantage of the vaccination. We know vaccination is the best defense against getting the flu. Even if members of your family are healthy and your kids are healthy, getting the flu—they're a carrier to folks who may not be so healthy, to a grandma or a caregiver, an aunt and uncle, or a friend, or playmate who may have asthma or diabetes or an underlying health condition. Your help in spreading the word, in making sure that we are successful in this campaign to keep our kids and young adults safe and secure would be enormously important.

There are a lot of people who say that we have too much going on in this government, that President Obama is trying to tackle too many things at once, that he should just work on one thing. He should just work on getting people back to work or doing one thing at a time.

I believe that we need to have a comprehensive approach to prosperity in America. We need to put people back to work. We need the Recovery Act to work. We also need to fix healthcare. We need to make sure our education system is rising to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for all of our children. We need to focus on early childhood education. We need to make sure that we spread the prosperity and the hope and opportunity in this country to all the citizens who are here, to all of our children to make sure that we are a prosperous nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I want to thank you for the work that you're doing. I want to tell you I need your partnership at Health and Human Services to make sure that our mission—health care for all Americans and delivering essential services to our most vulnerable populations—that we are successful in achieving those goals.

I believe that the words that Cesar Chavez used in the United Farm Workers campaign and then were repeated in a more recent campaign when people say you're doing too much at the same time, you can't do it, I say, "*Si se puede*." Yes, we can. Thanks very much.

**Ms. Murguía:** Well, thank you. Really appreciate your being here. I know there are a lot of places that she needs to be, but here she is with us making a statement and putting a stake in the ground that says our Latino kids are important to the future of this country. So thank you, Secretary Sebelius.



We are so, so pleased and very privileged to have with us someone else who could easily be in ten other places, but when we have asked he has responded on so many fronts. This is someone who is not just a friend of our community—he is a champion for our community.

He represents the state of New Jersey in the United States Senate. When he first entered the Senate in 2006, I believe he was one of three Latino senators in the United States Senate. Today he alone is the only Latino in the Senate. With that has come an incredible burden of responsibility to not only respond to his state, but because we see him as our senator too, to respond to so many of the community issues. This is someone who has not shed those burdens. He has embraced them.

He has been a champion for us on so many fronts—you heard Secretary Sebelius talk about passing earlier this year the S-CHIP expansion. Well, it was Senator Menendez whose voice was heard loud and clear on the floor when he said, “You know what? Legal immigrant kids have to be part of that S-CHIP expansion.” For the first time we were able to do that.

As the Senate Finance Committee—a critical, critical committee in this whole area of health care reform—has deliberated and moved through this debate, it has been Senator Menendez who has been the voice again for our community. Not only fighting for our legal immigrant kids and families, but also making sure that as Latinos in this country, citizens in this country, we will have access to that coverage because we have seen many, many efforts to try to create onerous barriers for our community and having that access. Through many efforts to bring costly amendments that would require a lot of red tape, it has been Senator Menendez saying, “You know what? We ought to find a path for mixed-status families to have access to coverage.”

We ought to find a way to make sure that verification of this reform is not going to block lawfully present residents or U.S. citizens from accessing benefits.

Time and time again he has been the voice guiding our community and leading our community in this important debate, but also on so many other fronts. I'm pleased and proud that he is here, and it is just one small statement of the work he is doing on so many levels.

We respect him because of his intellect and because of his fierce advocacy, but we appreciate him because of the values that he carries in his heart. This man carries our Latino values in his heart, and he is a great champion for our community.

Join me in welcoming Senator Bob Menendez.

## **Hon. Robert Menendez, U.S. Senator** New Jersey

Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Now, if I was smart enough, after that most gracious introduction by Janet Murguía I'd stop and sit down, but I'm not that smart. So let me say to Janet, thank you very much not only for your gracious introduction but for what the National Council of La Raza does.

You know, Janet is a tireless leader pushing on so many critical issues to our community through the coordinated effort of so many entities across the country that come under the umbrella of the National Council of La Raza. We couldn't have a finer example of a Latina leading the way in our community. Janet, thank you for what you're doing.

Of course, I am incredibly pleased to follow Secretary Sebelius who, in the short time that she has been in her position, has made a significant impact on critical health issues in our country from the H1N1 virus and meeting that challenge, to the health care debate that is going on in the United States Congress, which is critically important to our families across the landscape of this country. She is bringing all of her expertise to work as an executive, as a former governor, and she does it not only with intellect but she does it with a heart and compassion that needs to be at the core of the Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you, Madame Secretary, for everything you're doing.

Now, the lineup of speakers today is so incredibly significant. It's a tribute to the influence of NCLR's tireless efforts in so many different regards, and I'm not surprised that here we are with NCLR leading the way in the question of advocacy for Latino children. Their advocacy already in many respects has made a huge and positive difference.

It is my dream that one day that the next generation, when it comes of age, there will be no speeches necessary, there will be no symposiums needed, no Latino child without a decent education, affordable health care, or unable to attend college because they cannot access federal financial aid because of their legal status. No young Latino boy or girl living in poverty, a dream that will have come true by doing a good job on our watch and being good mentors.

But we are here today because that is not yet our reality, and the statistics are troubling. We are here today because for the second year in a row the Latino child poverty rate has risen, from 26.9% in 2006 to 28.6% in 2007 to 30.6% in 2008, three times higher than for White children.

We are here because Latino children are three times as likely as White children to have no health insurance whatsoever, so in this debate about creating a national reform on health insurance we have a major stake, as does the nation, but we are disproportionately among those who have no health care coverage whatsoever.

We are here because although 20% of public school students are Hispanic, only 55% of them will graduate on time with a regular diploma compared to 79% of Asians and 76% of Whites.

We are here because as the Latino population grows as a percentage of America's population, I have seen some demographic statistics that suggest that in 2025—in basically 15 short years—a third, a third, of all of the nation's schoolchildren will be from the Latino community. That means that a third of the nation's competitive future will come from this community.

While some of us will wash the kitchen knife that we used for our breakfast this morning in the kitchen, another one of us is going to be holding a surgeon's knife in the operating room, and how well educated that next generation of Latinos are is going to be incredibly important for our community.

This is about preparing our community, not just for ourselves but for America's promise. I think when we speak about these issues, while we are focused on ourselves as a community, we need to remind the nation as I try to do in my book *Growing American Roots*, we need to remind the nation that this is about America's promise, not just ours. That is our task. That is our duty. That is a part of making a dream a reality on our watch.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said a journey of 1,000 miles begins with but a single step. And to me, that first step is necessarily education. If you told me growing up poor in a tenement in New Jersey from a family who were refugees to this country, that I could rise to the first in my family to go to college, that I could rise to be one of 100 United States senators in a country of 300 million people, at that time in my life I would have told you that's highly unlikely but it is the promise of America fulfilled. But it was fulfilled because of the value that my parents placed on education even as they struggled to sustain ourselves and my brother and sister in our home.

Education is the key that unlocks social and economic opportunity and upward mobility for all in this country. Changing the harsh statistics that I mentioned before will require us working with parents who need to be more engaged with their child's education, parents particularly with some of the cultural barriers we have who look at a school as an entity of authority and would not go and question it. We need parents who are willing to get engaged in their PTAs, in their schools, and demand high performance from that school, and we need parents who understand even as they struggle that in fact keeping their child in school instead of pulling them out in order to help the family economically will produce greater dividends in the long run. It happened in my family. That's why I'm here talking to you. We need that to happen to Latino families across the landscape of this country. That's part of our challenge—working with parents to strengthen their role and to have them understand in fact how important they are in the education of their children.

It will also require federal, state, and local governments to make a full commitment to educational excellence and to adequately support public education. I look forward to a day in which Latino children will go to a clean, safe, state-of-the-art school yearning to learn, in a classroom with well-trained subject matter certified [teachers]—so that I am teaching science because I have a science background not because I got a social studies degree—to teach our children. [I look forward to] a day when our community understands that it is as cool and smart to know about Shakespeare as it is to sing and dance to Shakira.

In short, we need—even though I love Shakira—but in the end, in short, we need to make the next generation of Latinos want to stay in school, want to keep learning, want to try harder, and we have to have the parental structure to help them nurture that reality.

I look forward to a day when we as a community and America as a whole put a premium on education again, on intellect and learning. This is a world in which we, in fact, are globally challenged to create human capital for the production of a product, of the delivery of a service. We know no boundaries anymore. We know no boundaries.

An engineer's report is done in India and sent back to the United States for a fraction of the cost here. A radiologist's report is read in Ireland and sent to your local hospital for your doctor to be able to examine. Or, if you ever had a problem with your credit card, you end up with a call center in South Africa. In their pursuit of human capital for the delivery of a service or product, we are globally challenged.

What does that mean for America's competitive future? For our competitive future we need to be at the apex of the curve of intellect, the most highly educated generation of Americans the nation has known. That, in large part, must come from our community, as I said, because we will be a third of all of the nation's competitive future, so it is our dream for the next generation.

Even if we succeed and 100% of Latinos graduate from high school, there remains another obstacle. Right now, I saw one of the statistics that NCLR put out. It's true. Nine out of ten Latino children are U.S. citizens, born in the United States, so this image that some try to create on the airwaves that we just all came here yesterday over the border is clearly not true.

As a matter of fact, one of the things I talk about in my book is that we have been here since before the founding of the country when Bernardo de Gálvez, the governor of Louisiana, helped stop the British advance against George Washington. Or you could go here and visit Farragut Square, and there actually is a gentleman named Admiral David Farragut, a Spaniard who came to the United States and was the first admiral on behalf of the Union in the Civil War who made the phrase "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" a reality. And the oldest city in America was founded by someone—Saint Augustine, Florida—someone who's called Pedro Aviles de Menendez. I'm looking for a title search to see if I own any property there.



My point is we have been here since before the founding of the country. We have patriots in support and construction and defense of the country, and we have contributed greatly—we have contributed greatly.

But there are now college-age young men and women who came to this country when they were very young, who worked hard in high school, many of them becoming valedictorians and salutatorians, who are ready to study or wear the uniform of the United States of America but who see the doors slammed shut in their faces because their parents were undocumented. Thousands of young men and women kept from enrolling at colleges and universities, preventing them from achieving their full potential, ultimately reducing the amount of money they can earn, the taxes they can pay, and what they can do to invest in our economy. It reduces their spending power and the odds of one day becoming employers themselves and creating jobs for others.

If this nation is to remain at the apex of innovation and intellect, it is time to stop holding down our rising stars, time to unharness their energy. It is time to pass the “DREAM Act.”

Finally, having said that, as much as I believe that education is the key that unlocks the door to social mobility and economic opportunity, I also believe that to fully address the needs of Latino children we need to take a more holistic approach. And what Secretary Sebelius was talking about in so many different elements is an example of that.

We need to find multiple ways of dealing with the myriad issues facing children who live in environments that are so disadvantaged they are already falling behind by early childhood. Put simply, education does not exist in a vacuum alone.

Economic security—having policies that help strengthen families at the end of the day so that that family, when that child becomes of age to be able to leave school, is not demanding them to do so to help the family economically. Economic policies that help strengthen our communities. Job security certainly for all Americans in creating greater employment in the context of an economy that we were left that is the worst economy since the Great Depression and for which we are working very hard to move in a much different direction. But as we create progress on the economy and have growth in our domestic product and begin to see the numbers of unemployment reduce [while] still creating opportunities for our community.

Personal security—it's hard when you're walking in a neighborhood past the gang that is trying to proselytize you into the gang at the end of the day to get to school and not be worried about what you are doing and not face those challenges.

Part of the answer is to take the disparate number of programs that already exist in our government, see what works and see what does not, look in our community to organizations like NCLR who are incredibly effective, bring parents, teachers, and students together and engage everyone in the process. We need to see the whole picture. We need to see the whole picture and understand the relationship between education, poverty, security, and joblessness.

It is true that there are Latinos who are making great strides in building new businesses, in building and moving into the middle class and beyond, but a disproportionate number of us are struggling at the margin, struggling to make ends meet.

The Census Bureau says that one in five Latinos live in poverty. There is no doubt that the poorest among us have suffered the most in recent years as the gap between rich and poor in this country has dramatically widened, but every problem in the Latino community seems to be disproportionate.

About 11% of White Americans have no health insurance, but among Latinos that number jumps to 34%. The September 2009 unemployment rate was 9.8% overall for the nation, but for Latinos it was 12.7%. The simple fact is that all of these numbers are interrelated and must be dealt with as we discuss strategies and tactics for changing the circumstances particularly for young Latinos.

I do not have a silver bullet this morning. I wish I did. I do know and I passionately believe that part of my work in the Congress, in the House, and now in the Senate has been to fashion holistic approaches to some of the challenges that we have. That is certainly the opportunity that exists before us and our challenge.

The last point I want to make is that the time has come for another major issue facing many young Latinos and also our community as a whole and the nation as a whole, and that is the question of comprehensive immigration reform. We cannot rest until this gets done. I want you to know that for all of us, all of us, who have achieved success, whether in our professions, in our lives, with our families, all of us who achieved success and may think that this is about someone else, about undocumented people in this country, particularly from us as a community, they'd be sadly mistaken.

During my life I have been the first Latino elected to various positions, mayor, state senator, House of Representatives, United States Senate. During those periods of time, I have often heard the sting of hearing about "those people," "those people." Now, "those people" are not the 12 million undocumented in our country.

When I came to the United States Senate, one of the greatest democratic institutions in the world, the last place I thought I would hear in immigration debates two years ago the words "those people" was in the United States Senate. Unfortunately, I did. My friends, "those people" are you and me and all of those people who are trying to meet America's promise. For those of us who think the immigration debate is about someone else, I tell them they're sadly mistaken. This is about us as a community.

In every century, in every generation, immigrants have contributed to the progress and prosperity of this nation. This century is no different. The fruit that you may have had this morning for breakfast was picked by the sunburned hands and bent back of an immigrant laborer. The chicken you may have had for dinner last night was plucked by the cut-up hands of an immigrant laborer. If you have an infirmed loved one, there's no doubt in my mind that their daily needs are probably tended to by the warm heart and steady hands of an immigrant aide. The list goes on and on.

We can help them and help our economy and ensure our security as a country because I would prefer to know who is here to pursue the American Dream versus who might be here to hurt that American Dream. That's why we need comprehensive immigration reform. We need to get to it sooner rather than later.

I know you share with me this view that life is like a candle that is flickering, and what we want to do is make it burn a lot brighter before we hand it off to the next generation of Americans. That's why you're here. That's what our challenge is, but it is also our opportunity to do so. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Murguía:** I want to thank both of our speakers for being here this morning. You have your charge, and whether you decide to follow the spirit of Secretary Sebelius who said "*¡Si se puede!*" or Senator Menendez who said, "Damn the torpedoes, and full speed ahead!" we can find a place to work within both of those inspirational phrases. We are so pleased, so let's thank them for being here with us today. Thank you so much.

I know I am going to be back at lunchtime and in and out of some of this, but I just wanted to say as we kick this off, I am really pleased with the effort that all the NCLR staff has put into this and I really look forward to making sure that you all have a great day. I am going to turn it over to Patricia Foxen who has been our lead in this whole effort coordinating so much of our team. You have heard the speeches. Now it is time to get to work. Thank you all so very, very much.

## Latino Children in the U.S.: From Numbers to Stories

**Dr. Patricia Foxen**, Associate Director, Research  
National Council of La Raza

Thank you to those wonderful speakers. That was really inspiring. I was so glad to hear Senator Menendez talk about this push for a more holistic approach because that is really a theme that we're trying to emphasize throughout the day today.

I would now like to introduce our first session, which is "Latino Children in the U.S.: From Numbers to Stories." Our first speaker will be Dr. Linda Jacobsen who is the vice president of domestic programs at the Population Reference Bureau, a nonpartisan research organization in Washington that informs people about population, health, and the environment.

Dr. Jacobson is a demographer with more than 25 years of experience analyzing U.S. population trends and their implications. Her research has focused on family and household demography, poverty, and inequality. She is chair of the Government and Public Affairs Committee of the Population Association of America and a member of the Board of Directors of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics. She has been interviewed widely by NBC, CBS, CNN, and NPR and by many newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. She was previously a faculty member at Cornell and the University of Iowa and holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

**Dr. Linda Jacobsen**, Vice President of Domestic Programs  
Population Reference Bureau

Thank you, Patricia, and good morning everyone.

As we all in this room know, the number of Latino children in the United States has been increasing rapidly since 1990. As you can see in the bottom line on this graph, the number doubled from about eight million in 1990 to just over 16 million by 2008, and according to the latest projections from the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Latino children will rise to 27 million by 2030.

Of course, the proportion of all children who are Latino has also been increasing in the last 20 years from about 12% back in 1990 to 22% today. If we look 20 years out in the future to 2030, the projections indicate that Latinos will make up almost one-third of all children in the U.S. So why is the Hispanic population growing faster than other population groups in the U.S.? This slide shows the components of population change for race and ethnic groups from 2007 to 2008.

If we look first at the components for non-Hispanic Whites, which are the bars to the very left-hand side of the graph, we see that there is almost a one-to-one ratio between births and deaths: 2.2 million births and almost two million deaths. Net immigration among non-Hispanic Whites, which is the excess of in-migrants over out-migrants, only adds about 160,000 people per year.

By contrast, if we look at the next set of three bars and we look at the Hispanic population, we see that there is a ten-to-one ratio between births and deaths. While net immigration also adds almost 500,000 people per year to the Hispanic population, fertility accounts for 68% of annual growth and net immigration accounts for only 32%.



With respect to fertility in the U.S., Latino women have an average of about three children a piece compared to about two children a piece for non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks. Fertility levels in 2006 were at the same level as in 1990 for both Whites and Hispanics, but they declined across this period for Blacks.

As a result of these different growth rates then, the composition of the child and youth population in the U.S. will be quite different in 2030 from what it was back in 1990. Twenty years ago, more than two-thirds of all children were non-Hispanic Whites, but by 2030 children will already be majority/minority with less than half being non-Hispanic Whites and 53% being members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

The places where Latino children live in the U.S. have also been changing. This map shows that in 1990, Latino children were concentrated in Florida and in states in the Southwest and West. Less than 10% of children were Latino in most counties in the U.S. Those are the ones that are shown in yellow on the map. Only 7% of all counties nationwide had child populations that were 25% or more Latino. These are the ones shown in dark blue on the map.

However, by 2008, Latino children were dispersed across a much broader range of U.S. counties. Today, almost one-third of all counties in the U.S. have child populations that are at least 10% Latino. Those are all the ones shown in blue and turquoise on the map. These pockets of new growth really stand out in places like North Carolina, the Northeast coastline, and parts of the Midwest.

So Latino children and youth are a growing and vital part of communities all across our nation. They are a growing share of our future workers, voters, and taxpayers, and they indeed have significant potential to contribute to their communities and to the U.S. as a whole for many reasons.

First, they are a young population. One-third of Latinos are under age 18. They can help the U.S. to offset the cost of our aging population if they are healthy and if they have the right education and skills to fill the needed roles in our economy. Second, as you've already heard this morning, nine out of ten Latino children are U.S.-born citizens. And third, they have strong families. Sixty-six percent, two-thirds of them live in two-parent households.

But as you've also heard this morning, they also face some significant challenges in the areas of economic security, education, health, and language barriers. Although these challenges are described in much more detail in the fact sheet you all received in your packet this morning, I want to highlight just a few of the most important ones here.

We'll start with economic security. Although many factors contribute to children's health and development, economic well-being is one of the most important. Today, 28% of Latino children are poor and 60% live in low-income families, that is, families who are below 200%

of the poverty level. Children who experience this kind of economic hardship have worse health and educational outcomes and also may have fewer employment opportunities and lower earnings as adults.

What about education? High-quality early childhood education, as we already heard from Secretary Sebelius, plays a vital role in helping children succeed in school, but Latino preschoolers are underrepresented in these programs compared to both White and Black children.

At the other end of the public education spectrum, youth who don't complete high school are at a severe disadvantage in terms of both employment opportunities and earnings. Yet, among Latino youth who enter the ninth grade, only 55% graduate with a regular diploma or on time compared to 76% of Whites and 51% of Blacks.



Although the share of Latino children without health insurance declined between 2003 and 2007, almost one-fifth still do not have coverage today compared to only 9% of Blacks and 6% of Whites. More than half of Latino children with health insurance were covered through public programs such as the children's health insurance program.

Childhood obesity is linked to higher risks of a host of serious health problems, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and asthma. In 2007, 41% of Latino children between the ages of ten and 17 were overweight or obese compared to 27% of White children.

What about language barriers? Although most Latino children are born in the U.S., 62% have at least one parent who is an immigrant. As a result, one-fourth live in linguistically isolated households. Those are homes where a language other than English is spoken and where no adults speak English well.

In addition, almost one-fifth of Latino children themselves have difficulty speaking English. Such language barriers cannot only hinder children's success in school but can also prevent their parents from actively participating in their children's education and school activities. Having an immigrant parent, as we've also heard, can also prevent children from accessing important health and education benefits to which they are entitled.

It's important to ask the question today in thinking about the future of Latino children and youth: What will happen if all these challenges we've been discussing this morning are not addressed? To explore what the future might look like, we consider two possible scenarios. The first is that current risk factors or rates remain exactly the same in 2030 as they are today. In other words, no additional progress is made. The second scenario is that risk factors change between now and 2030 in the same way that they have in the past.

What do we find from scenario one if rates stay the same in 2030 as they are today? If the rates for these major risk factors do not change, then Latino children and youth will make up a much larger share of all children in key high-risk groups. For example, 32% of all poor children today are Latino, but this proportion will rise to 44% in 2030 if poverty among Latino children is not reduced. We see a similar magnitude increase among children in low-income families. The share of linguistically isolated children who are Latino will increase by almost ten percentage points, and the share of all children who are overweight or obese among ten- to 17-year-olds will rise to almost 40%. Finally, while Latinos comprise two-fifths of children without health insurance today, they will make up more than half of this population in 2030 if no improvements in coverage occur.

This is the picture if current levels are static. We also wanted to see what the future would look like if some of these risk factors changed. For example, as this graph illustrates, poverty rates for Latino children rose in the early 1990s and then declined in most years through 2005. However, they began to rise again for Latino children in the last few years.

We considered three important risk factors for children that can be addressed through policies and programs, and we asked the following questions: What if poverty among Latino children were to continue to rise back to the level it was in 1990, that is, 38%? Between 2003 and 2007 the share of Latino children who were overweight or obese increased from 41% to 44%. What if it increased another three percentage points by 2030? And finally, the share of Latino children without health

insurance actually decreased between 2003 and 2007 from 21% down to 19%. What if it were only to decrease by two additional percentage points by 2030?

The question we asked is: How many Latino children could be affected? And these numbers are in millions. So today there are 4.1 million Latino children who are poor. This number would rise to 10.2

million in 2030 if the poverty rate returned to its 1990 level. The number of Latino children who are overweight or obese would more than double from 2.2 to 5.2 million. Even if the share of Latino children without health insurance were to decrease by two additional percentage points, there would still be 4.6 million children without coverage in 2030.

Of course, this is just hypothetical and the future is uncertain. But one thing seems clear, and that is that the population of Latino children in America will continue to increase. Given this fact, it is more important than ever to address the health, education, and economic challenges they confront. If the U.S. fails to invest now in its Latino children and youth, then we may not have the healthy, productive adults our economy and society will need tomorrow.

I hope this brief overview of the current state of Latino children and youth in the U.S. has provided you with some food for thought and has helped to set the stage for the critical policy and program discussions to follow the rest of the day. A more detailed assessment of the current state of Latino children is provided in the fact sheet you received this morning.

#### American's Future



In closing, I wanted to also call your attention to an upcoming report that NCLR will be releasing in 2010 containing more detailed information on both state variations and recent trends since 2000 in the well-being of Latino children and youth.

Now, I'd like to turn it back over to Patricia to make the numbers come to life through the voices and stories of Latino youth. Thank you.

### **Dr. Patricia Foxen, Associate Director, Research National Council of La Raza**

Thank you very much, Linda. I'd like to shift the lens now and focus on a different type of research approach that complements these numbers and allows us to tell the story of Latino youth from a particular angle, which is their own voices.

#### Speaking Out



So I'll be speaking more specifically about Latino teenagers, who are an extremely important group for us to be listening to, as you all know over there. They're at a critical formative phase, the transition to adulthood, in which they're making crucial decisions about their futures and are solidifying their perceptions of the opportunity structures with which they're presumably presented.

I'd like to share with you some preliminary results from a qualitative study that we conducted at NCLR with Latino teenagers.

Before I describe the project, let me give a very quick overview of current research on Latino youth. There's been a fair amount of longitudinal research at this point looking at the incorporation of Latino youth focusing specifically on differences between foreign-born and U.S.-born kids and the changes that occur between the generations.

What we know is that, on the one hand, the assimilation process is diverse and depends on factors such as parental education, country of origin, and importantly, environmental factors such as neighborhood characteristics and poverty. Broadly speaking, however, patterns of assimilation through the generations show the same general gains for Latinos as other immigrant groups over time.



Second-generation Latino youth have been shown to be more likely to finish high school and attend college. Those between the ages of 18 and 24 have been shown to have a healthy rate of consistent connectivity to schools and work. Third-generation kids are more likely to live in higher-income families and almost all have English-language proficiency.

Unfortunately, there is a flipside to this picture. First, we know that third-generation Latinos do not show the same positive upswing for some important indicators. For example, they're more likely to be overweight than first-generation; the second-generation kids are then more likely to live in single-parent households.

Most significantly, the poverty rate for Latino kids doesn't improve much with the incorporation process. While 34% of immigrant children live in poverty, almost a quarter of second- and third-generation Latino kids are also living in poverty.

Several studies have in fact concluded that there's a sizable segment of Latino teenagers, including those from the different generations, that's being left far behind. These are adolescents who are caught in the cycle of high school dropout, menial jobs, low incomes, early pregnancy, and/or frequent confrontations with law enforcement.

Given this context, we decided that we wanted to hear from Latino teenagers themselves in different types of communities across the country. In particular, we wanted to better understand their perceptions of the systems that they come in contact with the most often and that are shaping their future outlook. That's school, workforce, and juvenile justice.

Rather than focus on one of these systems, as a lot of the research has tended to do, we wanted to get a more rounded knowledge of how these different systems together impact Latino teens' lives and outlooks and choices. So we added the juvenile justice piece because we noticed something happening in Latino communities that seems to be very much affecting Latino youth, and we wanted to find out what was going on.

As you can see in the slide, what we were interested in was better understanding how Latino youth shape their perception of these three systems, what they understand to be the barriers and opportunities in these systems, how they negotiate these institutions on a concrete level, and how they believe these systems in turn view Latino youth.

In terms of our methodology, the research included a total of eight focus groups with 60 Latino teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17 in four sites with very particular environmental characteristics.

Langley Park, Maryland, which is very close to here, represents a relatively poor suburban context with a large number of Central American youth whose families have often left poverty and violence back home but with a relatively weak infrastructure to support immigrants. Nashville, Tennessee represents a new Southeast gateway community with a very rapid recent Latino population increase, which is mostly Mexican. Providence, Rhode Island has a very diverse Latino population with Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, and other groups who have arrived during different periods. And Los Angeles, California, with a much more longstanding and a very large Latino population.

In each site, one focus group was conducted with immigrant youth and another with second-generation teens since we know that there are significant differences between these two groups' experiences.

We also conducted interviews with adult professionals—school counselors, teachers, law enforcement officials, and employers who hire Latinos—to provide some context for what was being discussed in the focus groups.

I'm going to go through this one really quickly. This slide really just pulled out some information about the different focus groups, and it gives you a context for the diversity of the different groups. You can see the primary country of origin in the different sites.

For example, if we look at the Langley Park, Maryland group, we can see that the average year of arrival in the United States for the immigrant kids was a bit higher than the other groups. This is a place where a lot of kids tend to follow their parents after they've been separated for several years and have been in their home countries, which creates a particular dynamic in the family. Those kids also had a higher rate of living in single-parent homes.

Now, in terms of our findings for this project, we're still in the preliminary phases of analyzing the focus group and interview data, and we'll be producing a full report at the end of the year. What we do know, however, is that one of the themes that stood out very clearly in all four groups was the topic of perceived discrimination and negative stereotyping. Given the limited time today, I'm going to focus the rest of this talk on this aspect of the research.

There's nothing new about the fact that there are negative images of Latinos out there, in particular of immigrant Latinos, unfortunately. Clearly, we're living in a very special moment where the combination of a very rapid expansion of the Latino population, profound economic anxiety, and the major expansion of our incarceration and detention systems are truly shaping both the more abstract public images of who Latino youth are, on the one hand, and also shaping the concrete pathways into adulthood for Latino youth.

What we wanted to understand more specifically was Latino youth perspectives of and experience with discrimination within these particular systems, at work and the juvenile justice systems and at school. This is an important research question, mostly because research looking at stereotyping among immigrant Latino youth has linked these processes to things like school dropout, lower educational attainment, behavioral problems, low self-esteem, stress, and mistrust.

Now, while some have argued that perceived discrimination can also result in strong coping skills and psychological resiliency, most researchers agree that interpretations of discrimination and associated negative outcomes are mediated by factors such as immigrant generation, peers, and parental social support.

So what did we find? Well, in general, we found that teens in these focus groups felt very keenly aware that they were being stereotyped and that there was a strong sense of exasperation about being lumped together into one homogenous group with negative attributes. I'll just give one example here. "They think he's Mexican. He's bad. He's in a gang. The teachers—they'll just look at you and sometimes say all kinds of stuff. You look like you're a drug dealer or you're illegal or you're a gang member."

Now, how did they perceive discrimination against Latinos particularly in the school system? Many kids spoke about their impression of being clearly stereotyped as a group with lower potential and about the expectation on the part of some teachers and administrators that Latino kids won't work as hard or aim as high academically. They express frustration, negative assumptions on the part of school staff, or leading them to be negatively tracked so they are segregated into certain classes or held back. They also stated that such negative tracking put them at an unfair disadvantage relative to other students and sometimes led to a loss of interest or boredom with school. So you can already see the quotes up there. "They think you're going to drop out of school. He's Hispanic. He's not going to graduate."

Youth sometimes viewed the workplace as discriminatory towards Latinos. For those who did, some of these perceptions seem to stem from what they heard from their parents, which made a strong impression on them. A number of kids discussed in particular the assumption on the part of the employers that Latino workers may be undocumented.

Now, perhaps the most surprising and disturbing finding is the extremely salient presence of law enforcement and juvenile justice in these youth's everyday lives. A majority of them had regular experiences with law enforcement, and most had friends or a sibling who had been arrested. There was a resounding sense that Latino teenagers were more than any other group being regularly stopped, questioned, and sometimes unjustly arrested by law enforcement and that the behaviors of the police toward Latino teenagers is driven by their appearance and ethnicity.

As you can see here, one of the quotes says, "We get stopped a lot. We get stopped normally. I got stopped like five times by the cops for no reason. I'd be walking down my street because there's a park right there, you know. And I'll be going there all the time to play basketball and then I see the police, come over here, son. I say, what now? You got anything on you? No. Just put your hands up. You're under arrest. I said, for what? I just came to play basketball. So what? You ain't supposed to be here. But I didn't know." Sorry. That wasn't read with much narrative flare. But you get the picture.

I don't want to draw very hard conclusions right now since, as I mentioned, this is a preliminary analysis. The data in some ways confirmed what has been found by researchers regarding negative patterns such as negative tracking in school and racial profiling that happens in streets and neighborhoods.

The main three points that I'm trying to make here are that, first, Latino teenagers themselves are highly sensitive to specific forms of systemic discrimination through which negative stereotypes appear to them to be institutionally reinforced. It's the compounded effects of negative stereotypes against Latinos in all three of these systems that seem to create a great deal of stress for some Latino teenagers, contributing to the perception of an unsafe and often untrustworthy overall environment.

Second, Latino teenagers demonstrated a range of responses to negative stereotyping including frustration and anger that sometimes results in poor decisions as well as clear strategies to resist both falling into risky behaviors and to resist and deflect the negative assumptions of others.

Finally, these negative stereotypes must be understood in the context of another significant theme that appeared in these groups. Negative assumptions reflected from the outside are sort of juxtaposed to a very strong American Dream narrative whereby immigrant parents are placing high expectations on children to succeed, whether it's financially or through education.

At the same time, many parents aren't able to be involved in their children's lives because of work responsibilities, because they themselves have a low educational attainment and don't know how to navigate the schools, et cetera. It isn't hard to understand that the tension between these mixed messages and expectations from both parents and society could lead to the lack of confidence that is often behind at-risk behaviors, especially when compounded with the realities of poverty, broken homes, and dangerous neighborhoods.

Unless they're able to find a support system role model or intervention that can restore that sense of direction, kids often fall through the cracks. This notion was echoed very much in the interviews with professionals who often stressed that outreach to parents, stronger gang prevention, and fostering a sense of belonging and interest were crucial to Latino teenagers' success.

**Latino Youth Speak**

I'd now like to go to a video that we produced that really does put a human face on this project and features Latino youth talking about some of the difficulties they've had to confront. It features two of our NCLR Affiliates: the George Sanchez Charter School in San Antonio, Texas and the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center in Langley Park, Maryland that do tremendous work with at-risk Latino youth. Can we turn the lights a little? Anybody? No?

Thank you. Well, that gives you a little bit of a sense of what some of our Affiliates are doing with youth and also the diverse needs of Latino youth.

## Environmental Factors Affecting the Well-being of Latino Children: Health and Poverty

**Dr. Patricia Foxen**, Associate Director, Research  
National Council La Raza

I think we are now going to have our second panel of the morning. We're a little bit behind. The second panel is entitled "Environmental Factors Affecting the Well-being of Latino Children." This is our panel on health and poverty issues.

I'd like to welcome the moderator of the panel, Janis Bowdler, who is NCLR's Deputy Director of [the] Wealth-Building Policy [Project].

**Janis Bowdler**, Deputy Director, Wealth-Building Policy Project  
National Council La Raza

No need for me to be up here by myself. I'm going to have our panelists go ahead and join us as well. So this morning all of the speakers have actually done a really good job of framing all of the issues that we're going to talk about in this first panel, so that makes my job as moderator really pretty easy. You'll see some NCLR staff folks coming around with index cards. As you heard, we're running late so I want to encourage you, if you have questions, please jot them down on an index card. They're going to bring them up to me and hopefully we'll have time to take one or maybe two, but we'll be able to respond to these questions in follow-up materials.

In this session we are really looking at fundamental issues of health and poverty. And I don't have to tell you how intertwined these issues are. I mean, we already heard this morning that these are two of the primary issues facing Latino children today.

They're especially important for our community. These are statistics you already heard, but they're worth repeating. Nearly one in three of our kids are living in poverty and one in five are without health insurance right now. Being poor and without health care is a recipe for disaster.

Children in low-income families have lower health and educational outcomes, and having poor health as a child can impact school performance and put you on a path to poverty as an adult. It's not hard to see how they become intertwined. And it's really not hard to see how our families end up in cycles of poverty and in cycles of poor health.

I want to talk just a little bit about some of the work that NCLR has been doing in this area because we've been working for a long time to improve the conditions for Latino children.

During the immigration and welfare debates of 13 years ago, the nation's budgets were balanced on the backs of legal immigrant children and their families that were trying to get access to public benefit programs. Since that time, NCLR has fought really hard to restore equal access to these programs for these children and for their families.



But when we dug a little deeper, we found that all Latinos were experiencing inequities in health due to their disconnect from high-quality health care, environmental challenges, and economic disadvantages. As a result, we established a formal Health Policy Project that would fight for equal treatment for Latino families in health care and equal access to programs. We're seeking parity for all Latinos. Earlier this year, we were a leading institution in major efforts for the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

You guys probably heard Senator Menendez talk about this this morning. For the first time, since 1996, coverage of legal immigrant children and pregnant this women will be allowed under Medicaid and CHIP if states choose to do so. That's pretty extraordinary. That was a benefit that our folks lost and we were able to get back for them.

Of course, many of you are probably also familiar with NCLR's Institute for Hispanic Health, which has developed premier programs for early intervention and gives our community organizations the resources and tools they need to do outreach in the local community. Notwithstanding all of our good work, an estimated 40% of children—of uninsured children—in America are Latino. I think Senator Menendez talked about that this morning as well. That's why health care reform is such a big priority for NCLR.

We've also spent decades working on antipoverty strategies. We were deeply involved in efforts to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit. Now, a lot of citizen children of mixed-status households can't get access to that program. We're going to talk a little bit about the ways in which federal antipoverty strategies actually meet the needs or don't meet the needs of kids, but the tax code is a really good way to target the working poor. And we've seen some success there.

We've also focused on improving access to stable, better-paying jobs with good benefits. And when research showed that wasn't enough to get families through times of financial crises or sustain them during retirement, we expanded our focus to look at asset ownership and increased saving levels for low-income Latinos.

In fact, some of you may be familiar—I don't know if I saw, I think I saw (inaudible)—the NCLR Homeownership Network has helped, for over a decade now has helped tens of thousands of Latino families purchase their first home. That's pretty remarkable that we've been able to do that—more than 52 organizations across the country. Unfortunately, I don't have to tell you, we're in the middle of a recession and a lot of those gains that we've been making are now being eroded. Also I'm just pretty much going to quote from Senator Menendez's speech which he gave this morning, but you mentioned the unemployment rate, nearly 13% [for Latinos].

You heard also this morning that we're a fast-growing share of all poor children, and Latinos lag behind their peers in accessing retirement vehicles, savings vehicles. And of course, the foreclosure crisis is really devastating our community. In fact, in the breakout sessions, we'll talk a little bit about this, but foreclosures create this perfect storm, where a lot of issues that we know cause—endanger—the well-being of children brought together in the same place: financial instability, core health, parental discord. We're expecting 400,000 Latino families to lose their homes this year alone.

Thus far the policy responses to unemployment and to foreclosure have really fallen flat. I think that this is a theme that you'll hear from the panel. We've talked a little bit about this throughout the day. The public responses, the policy responses need to take into account the unique needs of Latino families and children. We really cannot afford to leave our folks behind.

Picking up again from Senator Menendez who mentioned that this is becoming infinitely more complicated, as immigrants are actually scapegoated as somehow being the cause of all the nation's

problems. We are going to see more and more attempts to scapegoat immigrants and keep them out of programs. We can't do this. If we allow that to succeed, we will be endangering the future health and outcomes of all our kids.

Eighty-two percent of household growth between 2005 and 2050 will come from immigrants and their children. And there are three million Latino citizen children living in this country with at least one undocumented parent. We need to make sure that the strategies that we put in place really meet the needs of all these families.

That is what we are going to do this morning and start taking a look at the intersections between health and poverty, take a look at the programs that have been put in place to meet these challenges, figure out if they're working.

You didn't come here to hear me talk about this. We have a very distinguished panel. So I'm going to turn it over to that. Let me just introduce them both very quickly and then I'll turn it over to you guys and we'll go from there. We have with us Dr. Leighton Ku from George Washington University. Dr. Ku is a nationally respected health policy expert on immigrant health and access to care for vulnerable populations. He has authored or coauthored more than 200 reports, papers, and books about health policy issues, including articles in *Health Affairs*, the *American Journal of Public Health*, and *Science*. The Mississippi Center for Justice honored him with an award for promoting racial and economic justice.

Please help me in welcoming Dr. Ku.

We also have with us Mr. Jim Weill from the Food Research and Action Center. He's the president of the Food Research and Action Center—can I call it FRAC? FRAC, okay—the leading American anti-hunger public policy group since 1998. Under his direction, FRAC leads national efforts to improve and expand reach of programs like food stamps, school lunches, WIC, and other nutrition programs. He's devoted his career to reducing poverty and hunger, protecting the legal rights of children and poor people, and expanding economic support income and nutrition support programs and health insurance coverage.

As you can see, these are the perfect people to be talking about the issues facing our children when it comes to health and poverty.

Please help me welcome Mr. Weill.

## **Dr. Leighton Ku, Professor of Health Policy** **The George Washington University**

If it's okay, I'm going to stay here at the table. Hi. Thank you. It's an honor to be here addressing this NCLR meeting. I have great respect for NCLR. I should mention, you may have noticed by looking at me. I'm Asian. I'm Chinese. So why am I here? I'll acknowledge, however, though I am Chinese, I grew up in San Antonio, Texas, where the next NCLR meeting will be held. I've lived for the past 20 years in Mount Pleasant, which is the Latino district in DC, so all my life I've lived in multicultural backgrounds. And that's important to me.

I'm one of these people for whom a good holiday party would include tamales, pot stickers, and fried chicken. This is part of the new tapestry of America that we need to recognize.



Before I go too far and start talking a little bit about the health of Latino children and youth, I should acknowledge what all of you know and is implicit in the minds of everybody, but recognizing that there's a lot of diversity. That we sort of talk about Latino kids, but obviously there are differences and people are proud of differences between Cubans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, Puerto Ricans. There are differences in terms of people's educational backgrounds, including among Latinos. There are some who don't have a sixth-grade education, but there're lots who are doctors, professors, and even a U.S. senator that we met this morning. So it's a wide range of backgrounds, and it's these opportunities that we'd like to see help everybody. Again, I apologize a little when I'm going to talk sort of in a broad sweep about Latinos, recognizing that there's a lot of diversity.

The thing that I'm supposed to talk about here is about health and health access for Latino children and youth. I'm sad to say that the overall picture is distressing, and some people might even go so far as to say it's alarming. Compared to the status of White children or youth or even African American children or youth or Asian kids in the U.S., Latino children have a number of very serious disadvantages. As we've already heard, Latino kids are far more likely to be uninsured. Probably and more important in many respects than that is not only that they're more likely to be uninsured, but as a result they're less likely to have access to medical care, dental care, other sorts of health services.

I should say this is not only an issue for kids, but obviously this affects their families and their parents as well. In the realm of (inaudible) one group that we particularly care about is pregnant women. So there are also shortfalls of a large number of Latino women who don't get prenatal care, who get prenatal care late, and this has some serious consequences.

Latino parents, in general, are more likely to report that their children are not in excellent or very good health, compared to parents of White children, African American, or Asian children. So again, this is what we'd hope. This is what childhood is supposed to be. But you're supposed to be in excellent and very good health. So many Latino parents think that their kids are in that status. That's worrisome because it means if they're worried, then they're aware of some of the problems, the threats that face their children.

Obviously, some of the things that affect them in terms of access to care are language barriers. Some polls that have been done in the past of Latino parents basically say that language barrier is the number one barrier that they have to getting good medical care access for their kids, even more important in some respects than health insurance coverage, so obviously they're both really important.

In many cases, Latino parents report that they don't get respect when they come to the health care system. They find that there is some concern that they have about discrimination, lack of respect, lack of cultural understanding. This is a serious problem and an impediment in terms of getting health care that you can trust. You want to have a trusting relationship between patients and doctors, and this is a barrier.

There are health status indicators that are worrisome. Clearly one of the things that we've talked about today—I know there's a breakout session—is that Latino children are more likely to be overweight or obese. And there are related issues that have to do with food insecurity, and my good friend Jim Weill will talk about that in just a moment. Some of the consequences of this are that Latino children, particularly as they age to become adults, are at greater risk of serious chronic health problems like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and so on.

In addition, we know that even when they're children, many Latino children, particularly Puerto Rican children, often have serious problems with asthma, again another perfectly preventable disease. We could sort of deal with asthma much better. In many cases, Latino children have more dental problems because they have poor access to dentists and because in many cases they may be eating a lot of candies and soda. They have more dental cavities that haven't been treated.

Some studies show that Latino children may be in risk of more mental health problems. This varies a little bit, but in some cases, particularly issues relating to depression or suicidal thought are common among a large number of Latino kids.

The other thing that again comes in is higher teen birth rates. Probably one of the things that is more distressing is though in general the teen birth rate across the U.S. has declined over the past decade or so, it hasn't declined as much for Latino teenagers as it has for White or African American teenagers. This has been an area that's been problematic.

We heard Secretary Sibelius talk about H1N1 flu and some good news, as Latino children in general are about as likely to be immunized as African American or White children. So that's good.

On the other hand, given the concerns that we have about scarcity and new distribution for H1N1 flu vaccines, will Latino children have the same access to those vaccines? I don't know the answer to that. That's an important question that we're going to have to be concerned about and how we can mobilize community forces all across the country to make sure that they do have that access.

As I said, Latino children do have some advantages in the health realm. They are, in general, less likely to have some of the serious health problems or health behaviors we're worried about, a little less likely to smoke, a little less likely to drink, somewhat less likely to use drugs. They are more likely to live in intact two-parent families. All these are enormous social strengths that Latino children have.

On the other hand, one of the other things that we know is that unfortunately as Latino youth stay in the U.S. longer or become more acculturated into society as they become second- and third-generation kids, in many cases they lose some of these advantages and they begin to look more like at-risk American counterparts. So that's a problem too. The reasons for this are fairly complex.

One of the things that's clearly very much on everyone's mind and is clearly an important factor has to do with immigration status of families. In general, overall, about a third of Latinos in the U.S. are immigrants, though most Latino children, as has been pointed out, are born in the U.S., so most of them are U.S. citizens. There are a small share who are not citizens, a small share who are undocumented, but part of the problem is that the disadvantages that their immigrant families and immigrant parents have often have serious implications for how the children grow up in these mixed-status families. There are problems that relate to poverty, unsteady employment, low health insurance coverage. Then there are legal barriers that are faced by citizens.

Why this is important? The relationship between parents and kids? That's because there's a wide body of research that shows that what happens as far as things like health insurance status, health access of parents, also affects children.

For example, if a parent is uninsured, it is less likely that the child, even if they're insured under Medicaid and CHIP, the child is a little less likely to get preventive health services. There may be situations where we'd be concerned if there is a parent who has serious untreated mental health problems, that the depression that that parent may have may affect the way that this child grows up and develops. This is a serious problem that crosses generations.

Some of the underlying problems that affect the Latino children and youth have to do with poverty and education. And we know a lot about this. And again, Jim will talk much more about this. But we realize that Latino parents tend to be less educated, in many cases have poor jobs, lower-wage jobs, and this leads to family stress or deprivation. There's poor housing. There are fewer educational opportunities. All these things add up in terms of how people can avail themselves and help themselves get access to the health service they need and then how they can take the self-management, the preventive behaviors that people need to take care of themselves.

Again, I did mention language barriers. This is a serious problem, particularly for immigrants, but for many people who are U.S.-born Latinos as well. It's harder to get health care. You can't talk to the doctor with great satisfactory results. It's not an issue just with talking to doctors, but talking to nurses, talking to pharmacists. That's a whole range of things where we need to improve those services that, in addition, it has wider social repercussions in terms of people's ability to get jobs, to get social services, and so on.

Part of the thing that I guess concerns me, particularly about the situation with Latino youth and families, is realizing that, sadly, because of things like higher dropout rates or higher teen birthrates, there is the risk that Latino families are going to perpetuate these cycles in much greater frequency than necessary. Clearly, there are things that could be done to help. This is not necessarily the immigrants, but the Latino families, once they've been in the U.S., maybe over several generations, they may have problems that are replicated.

Now, the good news is that progress is being made. Progress can be made and has been made. As it's been pointed out, the uninsurance rate among Latino children has fallen in recent years. Much of this has to do because in general the Medicaid and CHIP program helped improve health insurance coverage for all kids, including Latino kids over the past decade. One of the big successes that has been mentioned was—this past year when the CHIP program was reauthorized—the inclusion of the Immigrant Child[ren's] Health Improvement Act provisions in the CHIP bill. I will give great credit to NCLR and Senator Menendez and a host of other people in ensuring that states are able to cover legal immigrant children and pregnant women under Medicaid and the CHIP program. This was a great step of progress.

One of the things I guess that was important in recognizing this is that even when the children themselves are noncitizen, afterwards most of them grow up to become citizens in the end. Ultimately, when we do things that hurt immigrant children, we hurt citizens in the future.

A number of states have considered and a couple of states have actually—despite the economic recession—taken up this option. This is one of these things that hopefully will improve over the years. Most states will take up the option, particularly as the economy improves. I expect that to be true.

The big topic on today's debate obviously is national health care reform. And there are lots of discussions that have come up about national health reform and immigration status. Let me pause that for a moment and simply say if national health reform is enacted, as either the versions of the House or the Senate, there'll be great improvement for Latino families and children across the U.S.—because so many Latinos, even when they're legal immigrants or when they're citizens, don't have access to Medicaid or parents don't have access to private health insurance through their job. The expansions of Medicaid, the expansions of private insurance that would happen under the subsidies through the health insurance exchanges, the expansions that might occur with greater employment mandates or “pay or play” provisions—all of these will have a great effect on helping Latino families.

Latino parents are often unable to get private health insurance because their employers don't offer or they can't afford it, things that will help encourage employers to provide access to insurance or that will help families pick up that insurance and make it more affordable will all help Latino families.

Nonetheless, it is also the case that there are provisions in health reform that, actually speaking, discriminate against certain immigrants. Certainly, the undocumented, as we all know, are not covered under the provisions of the bill. They're not going to be helped under that, despite the great degree of controversy of the "You lie" statement during the president's speech.

Nonetheless, there are still remaining questions of what could be done to help the status of legal immigrants, whether it's in terms of improving Medicaid access or making sure that they have access to some of the subsidies for the health insurance exchanges.

There are still ways that things could be improved. But let me mention, even for the undocumented, there are issues that come in with health reform—the issues that have to do with how we are going to support the safety net. How are we going to support community health centers or other institutions that provide care to those who are uninsured, whether you're an immigrant or not? That's another important stake in health reform. The health reform bill is not perfect. The bills are not perfect, but on the other hand offer some substantial gains to Latino families and children.

Another key element that we need to think about is how we can improve language barriers. There are some things that are already in the health reform bills about it, but that's going to be the sort of thing that basically takes a long struggle. It's not just the legislation. Part of it is working through how you do the logistics of improving language access in hospitals, doctors, offices, and pharmacies. It's going to take a long time.

I suppose the real questions that we have and the broader questions that we need to confront and you'll be addressing during the meeting are two things. One is that we need as a nation to decide what our views are on immigrants. Do we want to provide an open hand, or do we want to provide the back of our hand to immigrants? That's a big question that we need to think about. And again, there's also the question of what we are going to do to help Latino families and children who were here already, in many cases have been in the U.S. for generations, but also need improvements and need further help. And that's another big question of the future.

**Ms. Bowdler:** Dr. Ku, I let you off the hook, but I've asked Mr. Weill to make his way to the podium because I've just realized that we've got some tables over here who can't see very well. So, thank you. Just a reminder to folks that if you have your questions, make sure you find an NCLR staff person so that we can address those in the Q&A.

## **Jim Weill, President** **Food Research and Action Center**

If I close the laptop, are you going to lose—good.

Okay, good morning. I want to thank NCLR for having me here this morning. We've had a long-time great partnership with NCLR on issues of hunger and poverty and food stamp and child nutrition programs. We really treasure this relationship. I'm going to start with some facts that certainly won't surprise you, wouldn't have surprised you even if they had already been mentioned today, but that should continue to appall all of us.



The first is that the poverty rate for Latinos and Blacks is nearly three times that of non-Hispanic Whites in this country. The non-Hispanic White rate is about 9%. The Latino rate is 24%. The Black rate is 25%.

As many people have mentioned, these are 2008 data. They predate the recession almost certainly. The rates are worse now in 2009. Almost certainly they'll get worse in 2010. Hopefully, they'll stop getting worse then, but needless to say, more unemployment and lower wages lead to higher poverty rates for all groups. It's also true that for Latinos, as for other groups, children are much more likely to be poor than are adults overall. So among Latinos, 31% of kids or, as Janis said, about one in three kids live in poverty, while for adults that number is about 19%. As you might imagine, poverty has a huge impact on the well-being of children.

I don't think we have time to go into it. Arloc Sherman, who's doing the workshop after this on poverty, has written some of the seminal recapitulation of the research on this, but poverty affects—negatively affects—children's health, children's mental health, children's early development, children's education, and so on. It works through kids' lives in 100 ways to harm their prospects in life.

Even when the recession, and even before the recession, even when hopefully soon the recession ends and unemployment comes back down and we get back to where we were in 2007, all that means is that we're left with a huge poverty problem in this country. An especially serious one for Latinos and Blacks and an especially serious one for children, and one that we have to deal with. All this is mirrored in the food security data.

You probably all know the poverty data, but the government every year also determines what proportion of kids and adults are food insecure. The Census Bureau ... may ask families a series of a dozen questions. Are you skipping meals? Were your kids skipping meals? If nobody was skipping meals, did you have enough money for a healthy balanced lifestyle on a consistent basis? Did you have to rely on food pantries in order to do it, et cetera? And taking a very conservative approach to who's food insecure, the USDA analyzes those data and tells us how many families, how many households are food insecure.

Unlike the poverty data, where we have the 2008 data, we don't have 2008 data yet for food insecurity. We have 2007. The new data will be coming out next month, but the numbers are roughly the same: in 2007, 36 million people in the country, more than 12 million children, lived in food-insecure households. The rate was higher for children than for adults. Again, that was about three times higher for Hispanic households and Black households than for non-Hispanic White households. The rate was about 8% for non-Hispanic White households, 22% for Blacks, and 20% for Hispanics.

Twenty-seven percent of Latino children live in—3.9 million Latino children live in households that are food insecure. Those rates, those numbers are pretty close to the poverty numbers. Even though a lot of families aren't food insecure, a lot of other poor families are food insecure, so the populations aren't identical but the numbers are roughly the same.

The president has committed to ending childhood hunger in this country by 2015. He did this during the campaign in the position paper that came out in October. Without being unduly cynical, unlike some commitments made during the campaign, this is one that's been frequently reiterated by the administration since then, so it's a live commitment that we're working with them and we'll be advocating to them to actually fulfill by 2015. And in the back—sorry—in the hallway outside on the table with all the NCLR literature, there is some literature of ours, including FRAC's plan on how to get to the 2015 goal. I urge you to pick that up on your way out.

The important thing to bear in mind is that you can't get there through food stamps and child nutrition programs alone, that we have to attack economic insecurity in order to end childhood hunger and dramatically reduce adult food insecurity in this country.

As this paper says and as the president's October paper—I hate to say this, but his paper is more important than mine is—as the president said in October, this is about economic opportunity. It's about minimum wage. It's about refundable tax credits. It's about the economy and economic growth, and it's also importantly about food stamps and child nutrition programs and other things like that.

Now, I want to talk for a minute about those nutrition programs. The nutrition programs are wonderful programs. However, like other federal and state low-income supports, they don't assist Latinos and Latino children nearly as effectively as they do other populations.

In the next session there's—in the workshop on poverty, there's going to be some discussion of how the effects of government antipoverty programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and food stamps and others, are smaller for Latinos than they are for other populations in terms of lifting families whose pre-government assistance incomes are below the poverty line. If you look at the rates at which government assistance lifts families above the poverty line or above half the poverty line or above three-quarters of the poverty line, certainly the programs are less effective for Latinos than for other populations. I'm not going to go into those data.

The reasons for that are pretty obvious when you think of about language barriers, barriers to eligibility in most of these programs, immigrants and in many programs for documented immigrants, fear among eligible immigrants or immigrant parents of eligible citizen children, fear of applying, and the consequences of applying for benefits, case worker attitudes towards immigrants, all sorts of reasons that the programs are less effective for Latinos. But the good news is that food programs, the nutrition programs are better for immigrants than many of the other programs are. And that's in part due to the work that NCLR, FRAC, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have done in getting Congress twice to act to restore some legal immigrants to food stamp benefits since the huge cut in 1996 that Janis talked about.

In food stamps, which has now been renamed SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) gets angry at me when I forget and still call them food stamps—but in SNAP/food stamps, all documented children are eligible for food stamps, and all beneficiaries of disability programs, adults, and for other adults, they're eligible after five years, which is obviously a terrible rule, but better than in many other assistance programs right now.

But the other important thing which you may not be aware of, in part because for obvious political reasons NCLR and FRAC don't run bus shelter ads on this, is that in the child nutrition programs—lunch school and breakfast; the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program; the Child [and Adult] Care Food Program, which feeds kids at Head Start, child care centers, and family care centers; the summer food program; and the after-school food program—there're no restrictions whatsoever and no citizenship or immigrant requirements. All kids are eligible for those programs. They're seen as public education programs or public health programs, so all kids are eligible for those.

And the strength, the importance of that is that the strengths of these programs are incredible. They lift millions of people, millions of children and adults, out of poverty. They support health, learning, early childhood development. I could take each of these programs and tell you about 15 studies that show the profound impact, positive impact, on children. I'll just tell you that in the WIC program, which now serves—half of all pregnant women in America today are on WIC. Half of all infants born today in America are on WIC. More than a third of all children between the ages of one and five are on WIC. In Los Angeles City, 90% of the pregnant women are on WIC. All the evidence is, of

course, that WIC reduces infant mortality, reduces low birth weight, reduces health costs, reduces obesity, leads to better early childhood development, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Just one other example: school breakfast programs. In many states, now by the way including California, half of all public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches. The school breakfast program also boosts test scores, improves health, reduces school nurse visits, reduces absenteeism at school, reduces tardiness, raises test scores, improves achievement, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

There's a wonderful pediatrician researcher in Boston named Debbie Frank, who refers to the Food Stamp Program, but you could also describe the other programs, as among the best medicines America has for children. The only problem is that the medicines are given out in insufficient doses.

I also left on the table in the back this report we did for Pew's Partnership for America's Economic Success on the consequences of food insecurity for children, but it also talks about the positive impacts of this program. So a lot of the research is in there.

Let me talk for the minute I have left—let me talk for the 90 seconds I have left about obesity. There's a workshop coming up on that, too.

If you look at the population of low-income, poor people as a whole, there's a higher obesity rate than among other people. And that's what everybody in America and the media know. It's more complicated than that. If you split it out by gender, by age, by ethnicity in some populations, including Latino male teenagers, for example, more affluent people are more likely to be overweight or obese than are poor people. So there's a complicated set of causes and effects that vary by population that contribute to the obesity problem in this country.

Obesity for low-income people is driven in significant part by the same causes that obesity is driven for the rest of the American population—too sedentary lifestyle, too much TV, too few opportunities for physical activity, lousy school food, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And then it's also driven for low-income people by a set of factors that are particular to them—not enough resources to buy a healthy diet, lack of grocery stores in neighborhoods or towns, and so on and so forth.

There's also some evidence that because of lack of resources for low-income people, there is a “feast and famine” cycle that has both a psychological and a physiological dimension, where people eat when food's available and eat more when food's available if they're not sure there's going to be food the next day or the next week. Patterns change, and that contributes as well.

Most of the energy—this is an oversimplification, but that's because I'm running out of time—most of the energy that the media, the public, the government, the foundations, and the family foundations—my apologies if you take this the wrong way—are devoting to this issue is going into fixing school food, which is incredibly important, and tackling food deserts, places where there are no grocery stores, no healthy food options, overpriced options, and that's incredibly important, too. The one thing I'd say is that there's not enough energy going into the problem of getting enough resources to low-income people so they can purchase a healthy diet. That means increasing refundable tax credits. It means increasing the minimum wage. It means increasing food stamp benefits.

In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, there was a great start to do that. Food stamp benefits went up, the maximum benefit by 13%. But we're not going to address obesity among low-income people in this country basically until we solve the poverty and food insecurity problem and get people enough resources in their hands to do that. Not doing that is like telling parents that they're to blame for their children's poor health, but not giving them health insurance.

I'll end there, and I guess we're taking questions.



**Ms. Bowdler:** Okay, so I'm going to take the moderator's prerogative and kick it off. We do have a few minutes for questions, but I encourage you if you have a question, if you can jot it out on your note card and Sarah, Loren, Nancy, Eric—we've got plenty of people. Get it to somebody and we'll get them up here.

To kick off the Q&A, there are a couple of things that I heard you guys saying. We've really got a mixed bag when it comes to the set of interventions that we have when it comes to children's poor indicators and health and poverty. And then, when you lay over that the impact of the recession, it just seems obvious, like you say, it just follows that everything becomes worse. The unemployment is going up. People are losing their homes. We know that's creating a set of circumstances, when all of the different pieces that you described get worse for families. And we also know that—you mentioned already that we're not supposed to call it stimulus, but a lot more people know it as the stimulus—a lot of the benefits of the stimulus program are not really reaching our families. So I'm wondering if you can talk about some strategies you guys think would be effective, immediate interventions for families who've been hit hard by the recession, who are suffering in these key areas that we know have long-term impacts for children, if you have any suggestions or thoughts on what those policy interventions might be.

**Mr. Weill:** Well, in my small part of the universe, the story is a little bit better. So I'll talk about that first. In all the federal nutrition programs I talked about, while sometimes the states share the administrative costs, the programs are 100% federally funded. The benefits—food stamps, school meals, free price school meals, WIC, et cetera—are 100% federally funded. And they are entitlement programs, except WIC, and WIC is so popular Congress keeps growing it, so it might as well be an entitlement program for most of the population.

The recession is doing huge damage to families, don't misunderstand me. But these programs, in theory, can reach everybody affected by the recession, except certain populations, including adult immigrants in the case of food stamps. And in fact, food stamps—well, just to give you a sense of this—in 2007 the nutrition program spent \$60 billion on federal programs. In this year, this fiscal year, it'll be more than \$80 billion. So the programs have been incredibly responsive. There are ten million more people on food stamps than 18 months ago.

[The] school meal [program] is growing more slowly. I'm going to stop there, but—so one thing to do is make sure everybody eligible for these programs is getting into these programs. And that's a particularly tough and sensitive job to do for Latinos because of fear of immigration consequences, cultural barriers at the offices, things like that. I'm going on too long, but not—it's not an accident that the three states that fingerprint food stamp applicants are Arizona, California, and Texas, which has a huge effect obviously on discouraging people from applying. We're working with USDA to try and shut that down once and for all, and we'd love to have your help on that. So getting people into these programs that, with some important exceptions, really have an open door right now is incredibly important.

**Ms. Bowdler:** Dr. Ku, I want you to address that question, but also one of the questions we've just got from the audience relates to this, on access for mental health. "Research that NCLR just did in partnership with Center for Community Capital found that mental health was a huge issue for parents and children going through foreclosure, and it's one of the issues that gets talked about the least." We can talk about that and weave in mental health as well.

**Dr. Ku:** Sure. Well, what can be done in the short run? Obviously, health reform is something we're talking about. That's an important thing to act on in the near term. Though, I'll grant it, many of the effects of health reform will not be felt for a number of years. Nonetheless, that's on the political horizon right now. There're certain things like the Child Nutrition Act which will be on the horizon

before too much longer, so there are some things that need to be worked on. Probably so many of the problems that we're concerned about in other areas—and this sort of goes with public health programs, mental health service programs, social service programs, or programs that are funded and operated at state levels—has been because the current economic cycle has meant that state revenues really plummeted, that most states have been under fairly severe, massive budget cutbacks. So that's caused a fairly serious problem.

The economic stimulus bill helped provide some state fiscal relief, but clearly it didn't help all those states in necessarily safeguarding those services. So much of the activism really needs to be back at the state and local level saying, what can be done to make sure that those services—which are largely state and local services—are protected, despite the fact that there's an economic downturn because the needs do go up when there's a downturn. There is more need for social services. There is more need for mental health services during these time periods.

I'll say it. This is a long-term solution. This is not a short-term solution. Part of the key has to do with how states raise money and how states revenue. It is the case—and this may sound awfully wonky—but part of the problem is that states in general have structural problems with their budgets and that states are often reliant on things like sales taxes or property taxes that don't grow as rapidly as the economy does in general. Many states don't have income taxes. They haven't diversified their income basis. And God knows, we all know that lots of politicians have sworn oaths that they're never going to raise taxes at all. But obviously, if we want some of these services to be supported, particularly that will protect low-income people, we do need to make sure that there's public revenue. That's one of these things that I've often said to many people. You need to understand how things like state taxes and state revenue works.

It may sound awfully wonky, but that's important.

**Ms. Bowdler:** I have a stack of questions here, but we are out of time. We could go on and on and on about these issues and, fortunately, you have an opportunity to do so in the breakout sessions that follow. As a bonus, when you go to your breakout sessions, you get coffee. I know you guys all could use a cup of coffee. You've been here since 8:00 in the morning. I encourage you to head to your breakout sessions. The questions that we got that we were not able to answer, we'll see what we can do, either by following up with people who put their names on them or working them into our follow-up materials. If you could help me in thanking our panel, then I'll send you off to breakout sessions. We'll see you there.

## Luncheon Speakers

### Janet Murguía, President and CEO National Council of La Raza

Yes. This is very exciting. We are now into an afternoon with a lot of hard work, but I do believe that with all of the engagement that we are seeing here, we are going to leave with some very clear direction on how to move forward and advance this important agenda.

I see some new folks, some new faces—our friend from the Hill, Peter Zamora with Senator Bingaman's office. He has been a real champion for us. Thank you for being here. I know there are other folks who have been joining us throughout the morning. Thank you. We are getting folks in and out from the Hill because there seem to be a few things going on up there.

Our next guest is someone we are so pleased and so proud to have with us here today. Anytime you talk about children and the status of children in the United States, you just cannot do it without talking about Marian Wright Edelman.

Marian Wright Edelman is an icon in this country. Her dedicated years of service, at least 36 if we have that right, include the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), which she founded in 1973. You know, she has been a national champion for our children, and the CDF has been a champion of policies and programs that provide children with the resources they need to reach success by lifting them out of poverty and ensuring their access to health care and quality education.

Marian Wright Edelman has been an inspiration to me. She is an advocate, an author, an activist, and someone whose core passion in advocating for underprivileged children has been a guiding inspiration for many of us. I am pleased that NCLR and CDF have been working together. We understand that we have common goals and a common agenda and how important it is for us to leverage each other's work in order to better achieve those goals.

I cannot think of a more fitting person to address you all today at such an important time than Marian Wright Edelman. Please join me in giving her *una bienvenida*.

Thank you.

### Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President Children's Defense Fund

I am so glad to be here. I'm honored to be here. I want to just thank Janet for her leadership and National Council of La Raza for your leadership. You are so important and I'm so glad that you're holding this first of many annual conferences to come on Latino children and youth.

We're looking forward to working with you, and I'm just grateful for your partnership with other groups like the NAACP and the National Congress of the American Indian and the Asian American Justice Center. I'll get all of them right. We're all together in trying to make sure that our Congress and our president do right by children in the national health reform.

That is what I'm going to talk a lot about. You're going to hear a lot of statistics from many, many greater experts than I. We will be publishing new statistics within the next week and you will see large numbers of Latino facts on there.

I will simply say that one in five of all of our children in America is Latino, that fifth child. You have more than one million new births. You are growing rapidly, so more than one million of 4.3 million births in the United States in the most recent data, nearly one in four newborns are born to Latino mothers. You're our growth edge, and we need to make sure that every one of those mothers gets prenatal care and that every one of those children gets the healthy start that they need in life.

We are now in the middle of talking about health care, but a larger percentage of Latino children are uninsured than any other racial ethnic group. Almost 40% or 3.1 million children of all the uninsured children in America are Latino, and one in five Latino children generally is uninsured. Nine out of ten of them, 90% of them, live in working families, playing by the rules but cannot get that basic health care, and you and I are going to do whatever is necessary to change that fact this year.

We know that roughly two-thirds of all uninsured Latino children, as is true of all children, are already eligible for Medicaid and CHIP, but they can't get it because of the bureaucratic barriers, and you and I are going to change that together this year. These children are born only once. They have only one childhood. Their brains and bones and blood are being formed right now, and so we need to do this with a sense of urgency.

We have pushed so many of our children into the tumultuous sea of life in small and leaky boats without gear and compass. I hope God is going to forgive us and I hope our children are going to forgive us. I hope that we're going to come out of this meeting with the commitment to do whatever it takes to give all of our children, all of them, the anchors of faith and love, the rudders of purpose and hope, the sails of health and education, and the paddles of family and community to keep them safe and strong when life's sea inevitably gets rough.

I quote in almost every speech the great German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who died opposing Hitler's Holocaust, but he believed that the test of the morality of a society is how it treats its children.

The United States of America has been blessed with great wealth. We lead the world in Gross Domestic Product. We lead the world in military technology and military expenditures and military exports. We've got more millionaires and billionaires than anybody. We lead the world in health technology and expenditures (inaudible), yet we do not do right by our children, and that is our social and moral and economic Achilles' heel.

Just listen to these facts. And the first set of facts I'm going to give you are for all children, and then we'll get to the children who are disproportionately poor and disproportionately at risk. Every day, every ten seconds of every school day, a child drops out of school. Every ten seconds of every school day, a child drops out of school. A majority of all children of all race and income groups cannot read or compute at grade level in fourth, eighth, or twelfth grade if they haven't already dropped out of school. Over 80% of Latino and Black children cannot read or compute at grade level in fourth, eighth, or twelfth grade if they have not already dropped out of school.

What is a child going to do if he can't read and write and compute in this globalizing and competitive economy? You're being sentenced to dead-end lives. You're being sentenced to the cradle-to-prison pipeline which I'm going to talk about very briefly. You've got to be able to get an education if you're going to survive.

Despite our wealth, every 33 seconds we let a child be born into poverty, and a majority of those children who are living in poverty are in working families playing by the rules that cannot get a job that pays enough money to make their children be able to lift themselves out of poverty.

Every 39 seconds a child is born without health insurance, and when somebody tells you they're going to fix this child health system in four years or in 2019 or whenever this change takes place—children can't wait. They only have one childhood, and I want you to go out of this room with a sense of urgency and say: Children cannot wait. We've got to get them health care reform that's real and that's accessible and that's affordable and that is comprehensive this year.

Every 40 seconds a child is abused or neglected. Every 60 seconds a child has a child. We're filling up the city of Atlanta each year with children having children, and we know about teenage pregnancy. We know about dropping out of school and not having an education, and the intergenerational cycle of poverty repeats itself and Black and Latino children are disproportionately reflected in that number.

Finally, I just want to give a figure on gun violence, even though that's the most unpopular thing that anybody wants to deal with, but one of our children is killed by guns every two hours and 45 minutes. We lose eight children every day, the equivalent of Virginia Tech to gun violence. I don't know what it's going to take to get us to stand up and say we're going to stop the killing of children.

All of these issues are issues that affect every part of a child's life. Children do not come in pieces, and so when I'm talking about health care this year as a thing that we must get done, that really is an education issue because you're sitting up in the classroom, you can't hear or see the teacher, you've got an attention deficit disorder. That's an education issue. If you're neglected or abused, you're not going to do well and be able to concentrate on what's going on in school.

So we've got to learn how, as child advocates, to get out of our silos, and get out of our boxes, and begin to see the whole child in the context of a family as we go forward.

Families are affected by their community and communities are affected by the policies of their local and state governments and by the cultural signals that drown them out with messages of violence and excessive materialism and excessive individualism. As we go forward and take on one or more problems that children face, I hope we will see those in the context of the whole child. And I like to say, let's act as if we're going to renovate our national house and understand that national house has ten or 12 rooms and the first room is going to be health care, getting children born healthy, but let's see all these other rooms before we say we have done our job. Let's look at the whole child.

Let's just imagine for a moment God visiting our very wealthy nation that's blessed with five children. Four of them have enough to eat, got warm rooms in which to sleep, one doesn't. She's often hungry and cold, and on some nights she has to sleep on the streets or in a shelter or even be taken away from her neglectful family and placed in foster care or group homes with strangers.

Imagine this rich family giving four of its children nourishing meals three times a day, snacks to fuel boundless energy, but sending the fifth child from the table and to school hungry with only one or two meals and never the dessert the other children enjoy.

Imagine God visiting this wealthy family that makes sure that four of its children get all of their shots, regular health checkups before they get sick, and immediate access to health care when illness strikes—but ignoring the fifth child who's plagued by chronic respiratory infections and painful toothaches which sometimes abscess and kill for lack of a doctor or a dentist.

I have a sense of urgency because I hear all of these stories. We lost two children last year in the same week who had toothaches that abscessed and infected their brains and died because they



couldn't find a medical doctor who'd take them and because the states couldn't decide whether they were Medicaid or CHIP eligible. Children shouldn't die from toothaches in the United States of America. They should be able to get a dentist and have it all taken care of.

And we, taxpayers, pay for the (inaudible) in Prince George's County who died at 12, \$250,000 because by the time he got to children's hospital had multiple operations. That's what we taxpayers paid. And if we could have gotten a dentist for him in a timely manner, it would have probably cost \$100. That's just not cost-effective, and it's also just plain cruel and unnecessary. And you and I can do something about it this year. And we must.

Imagine this family sending four of their children to good, stimulating preschools, making sure they have music and swimming lessons after school but sending the fifth child to unsafe daycare with untrained caregivers responsible for too many children, or leaving her occasionally with an accommodating relative or neighbor, an older sibling, or all alone.

Imagine four of the children living in homes with books and families able to read to their children every night, but leaving the other child unread to, unspoken to, unsung to, and un-hugged or propped before a television screen or video game that feeds him violence and sex and racial and gender-charged messages. Intellectual pabulum interrupted only by ceaseless ads for material things beyond the child's grasp.

There's a scary story. A study by Hart and Risley in Kansas City that looked at the children of affluent parents and compared them to children of poor and welfare parents found that by age three, there was already a 30 million word interaction gap.

Those of you who have had a chance to look at the *Times* yesterday, there was a study about the fact that many Latino mothers have babies at normal weight, but somehow those babies then begin to lag and are already behind by age three. You can't teach what you don't know.

We really have got to make sure that there's parent support and home visiting and that children—we've got to deal with the parent as well as with the child. But this is a very big issue because many children never ever catch up from those early days of not getting the kind of intellectual stimulation and interaction that they need. That's why we've got to make sure that Early Head Start's in place everywhere. Only 3% of the eligibles get it. That high-quality Head Start and child care is available.

Let me just say, all of us have to get out of our silos because the Early Head Start people often don't talk to the Head Start people. They don't talk to the child care people, don't talk to the preschool. This is not about us, adults. It's about children and we, adults, need to get it together and stop all of this organizational (inaudible).

Imagine this family, this rich family, sending some of their children to high-quality schools in safe neighborhoods with enough books and computers and laboratories and science equipment and well-prepared teachers—and sending the fifth child to a crumbling school building with peeling ceilings and leaks and lead in the paint and old, old books and not enough of them, and teachers untrained in the subjects they teach and with low expectations that all children can learn, especially the fifth child.

I believe very strongly that education is the civil right of our new generation trying to keep everybody in law school. We don't need more lawyers unless they're going to become juvenile court judges, and I say that as a lawyer.

We need to upgrade and respect our teachers. You know, if you're doing something with children, whether it's early childhood or whether you're the pediatrician, you're always at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of salary and recognition. We need to change that sense of what's important, and so we really need to value our teachers but we also need to hold them accountable.

If you've got a system that's failing 60% or a majority of all of our children, 80% of Black and Latinos, something's wrong. And so we also, as community members and community leaders, need to hold accountable those who are responsible for seeing that our children get educated. We've got bad teachers in the classroom, get them out there. They shouldn't be there. We must hold them accountable.

These children we have, they're so fragile. They've got so many risks. If they're going to homes where they may not get all the stimulation they need and they're in unsafe neighborhoods, they don't need to go to school and have their confidence—low expectations. And children will live up or down to our expectations.

So let's just start thinking about children and hold all of the adults in all the child caring systems responsible for doing their job with children so that we, as parent leaders, and we, as leaders in the community, need to raise our voice.

Let's just imagine that some of these children in these families go to high-quality schools, and we know that, but then we've got these children—we have many of them in our homes—who are so excited about learning and they're looking forward to finishing high school and going to college and getting a job as every child ought to be. And that last child falling further and further behind grade level, not being able to read, wanting to drop out of school, being suspended and expelled at younger and younger ages because no one has taught him or her to read or compute or diagnosed his attention deficit disorder or treated his health and mental health problems or helped him keep up with his peers.

And let me just digress for one second to say, we need to deal with school discipline problems because what you have seen in schools throughout the country is a trend for all of the zero tolerance drug policies in schools and three strikes and you're out. I think we adults have lost our common sense. We have children being suspended and expelled and even arrested on school grounds at five and six and seven years of age for behaviors that used to be handled in the school principal's office or by calling a parent or by calling a grandparent.

We need to sort of think—we're dealing with children. I've never understood why, if a child is truant or tardy, you expel them from school. You need to find out why the child is not coming to school and we need to stop making our schools prisons.

I mean, if you took the New York City school security system, it would add up to the sixth-largest police system in America. That is not right. Something is wrong. We need to begin to get back to dealing with a child's problems and making sure that they are tended to and that we are not solving a problem by pushing him out of school.

Can you imagine as the six-year-old in Florida who got arrested by three cops, three police officers came in, handcuffed this six-year-old child at the ankles and at the wrists, what kind of trauma that may well rest and live with that child for the rest of his life? We adults need to be adults and start thinking about our responsibility and our stewardship to children. When these kinds of things happen, we need to make ourselves felt.

Finally, imagine four of the children engaged in sports, music, and arts and after-school and summer camps and then some enrichment programs. And the fifth child hanging out with peers or going home alone because mom and dad are working or in prison or have run away from their parental

responsibility and escaped in drugs and alcohol, leaving him alone or on the streets during idle non-school hours, and weeks and months at risk of being sucked into illegal activities—what we at the Children's Defense Fund call the cradle-to-prison pipeline—or even killed in our gun-saturated nation.

Let me just say there's a silly, in my view, argument going on that the solution to poor children's problems is education, whether it's just in the schools or whether it's also in the community. It's both, and schools need to teach. That's what their job is.

But children are in school only 17% of the time. We need to make sure that they are in safe havens after school, in the summers with safe adults and mentoring. They don't have summer learning laws. You know, the gangs are open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. And I don't know how many hours the church doors in your community are open for children, but we need to begin to compete with the gangs and the drug dealers with positive institutions.

We've got some models like Freedom Schools, and we're having Black and Latino young people, college-age students who come and get trained on Haley Farm, and they are running these summer enrichment programs that have literacy-rich wonderful books teaching them how to resolve conflicts, engaging them in service. We're trying to empower these children. We have about 150 or 160 more.

We'd love to have you engaged, but they have fun. Learning is fun. They make reading fun. They're very, very engaged. We need to have something for them to do all year round. My daddy used to run us crazy. He would always say, "Don't you have anything constructive to do?" All of us are workaholics because he'd come, and if he'd see us sitting down, he would have a chore for you. We figured out very early on as children that the only time he wouldn't give us a chore was when we were reading, so we were all big readers. But that's a good thing.

So children need to be kept busy. They need to be kept—it's all common sense. Good policy is about good parenting, and what we've got to do is to want for other people's children what we want for ourselves. How do we do this? Contrary to popular stereotypes we (inaudible) out this fifth child.

The fifth child is more than twice as likely to live in a working family and to be on welfare; it's more likely to be White than Black or Latino and is more likely to live in a rural or suburban area than in a city.

I have someone who's just brought me the 100 poorest counties, and the statistics for the rural counties are just staggering. I live in a poor rural county, was born and grew up in a poor rural county in South Carolina. Our unemployment rate is 23% and there's nothing to do. The biggest business in town is the prison industry, and we've got to stop that. We've got to stop that. There are more things to do inside the prison than outside the prison, and we've got to compete with positive alternatives.

We all know that Black and Hispanic children are at far greater risk of being poor and of entering the cradle-to-prison pipeline. The most dangerous place for a child to try to grow up in America is at that intersection of race and poverty. Racial disparities, despite the enormous progress that I'm so proud of with the transformation at the top—you know, we've had a lot of steps forward, but we've really got to understand that racial disparities still permeate all aspects of the major American institutions that shape the life chances of millions of our children.

When you combine that with poverty, countless children are being put at risk of incarceration, and we've got to begin to replace that incarceration with a pipeline to a successful, healthy adulthood, to productive work and college, and to see how we can do what we've got to do to dismantle that pipeline now because incarceration is becoming the new American apartheid. And poor children of color (inaudible).

We have to sound the alarm about this threat to American unity and community, act to stop this growing criminalization of children at younger and younger ages, and tackle the unjust treatment of minority youths and adults in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems with urgency and persistence.

Janet, I realize I was remiss because we've done a series of summits across the country, and many of you in Texas may have been engaged in some of those in your areas. We did a major report on the cradle to prison pipeline in both English and Spanish, and I would love to be able to at least bring copies and have you take them back and use them because this is a national problem.

It's a growing catastrophe in the Latino community and in the Black community, and it scares me every time I see the figures that a Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy a one in six chance; and a Black girl one in 17. It's a disaster.

This prison pipeline is undermining our family stability. It's undermining our political power because if you go to prison you often come out and you can't vote in some states. It undermines our economic power because you can't get a job if you've got a prison record, often. It undermines all of our community and national security because people who come out of prison and can't find a job are going to have to engage in more criminal activities, leaving none of us safe.

This is something we've got to wake up to. If we don't wake up and do something about it, it's going to undermine all the progress of the last 50 years, and we cannot go backwards.

Our children are on a downward trajectory, downward mobility among all of our children, but downward mobility among our minority children. We must stop it. So your gathering here is so important.

So what do we do? One is, I hope we can just recognize that cradle-to-prison pipeline. When you say poverty and racial disparities, people glaze over and say, oh, that's intractable. No, it's not. These are not acts of God. These are choices that our country has made, that our institutions made. We can make them make new choices, but that's why you're present here.

We've got to close off all the systems that are feeding our children into that pipeline.

The one system I want to talk to you about today is the thing that we can change this year, and that is our absence of a coherent, comprehensive, accessible child health system.

Here are the four things we want. Because of the pending versions on the Hill, children by the millions may be worse rather than better off under health care [reform]. Why are we begging the United States of America, the richest nation on earth, to give all of its children cost-effective, preventive health care? That's what we're doing, but we're going to do more than beg. We're going to make a big ruckus and a big noise because we cannot let our children go another year, another three years, another five years into this prison pipeline out there vulnerable.

Here are the four things that we've got to get done, and I've been very grateful for National Council of La Raza's engagement with a group of other allies, including NAACP, as we're trying to move that forward.

I'm going to be running tight—oh, my goodness. I'm already supposed to be there. I will stop talking.

Four things we've got to get done. We've got to have real child health system reform. I've already said that two-thirds of the children who are uninsured—of the eight million children uninsured—are already eligible for Medicaid or CHIP. That's true of the Latino children. They can't get through the bureaucracy. We need to simplify it. Twelve months continuous eligibility—don't have people come every three months, every six months, or face to face. Let's presume them eligible. Let's just make



it easy for them to get health care. If they're in any means-tested program, get them into the health care system. Just don't make it so hard for parents to have to navigate these two systems [because] millions of children are falling through the cracks.

So simplify the system. We've got amendments that we're trying to get in on the Senate side and on the House side, Congressman Rush, to sort of get that adopted, and that's where I'm supposed to be lobbying right now. Simplification.

Secondly, let's make sure that all children get comprehensive benefits, the kind of benefits they get under Medicaid. God did not make two classes of children, and CHIP children shouldn't have less than Medicaid children. Those exchange children—we don't know what they're going to get, so we would like to have all children wherever they live have comprehensive guaranteed benefits which include mental health.

The third thing is that we need to have one bottom-line national health safety-net. All of us seniors get our Medicare regardless of our Social Security, regardless of where we live. We've got 50 different state eligibilities for CHIP and 50 different state eligibilities for Medicare. We want to just make it 300%, 66,000 so that a child in New York is not going to get health care when they're just at 400% and a child in Mississippi to 150%.

A child is a child regardless of where they live. Let's give all children a minimal health safety-net. We cannot continue to fight these 50 state battles in Texas and in California and in Utah. Let's go to a national health protection system, and let's make it 300%. That's what we're asking.

Lastly, let's just make sure that the cost-sharing protections for children in exchange or whatever are all going to be protected. Because right now that's why we believe that millions of children will be worse rather than better off because we're not guaranteeing certain things about the exchange.

One of the things we'd like to do, frankly, many people don't know they're killing CHIP. I don't want to kill CHIP. I want to keep it and fix it. We need to talk about keeping it and fixing it, making it mandatory, put in these changes that we need and let us move forward, but we're going to need you do to a lot to help.

We're going to need your voice. We're going to need it this week and next week, and on November 4<sup>th</sup> because we haven't been able to break through these big issues, public plan, PAYGOs, all the rest. We're going to have to bring babies and children to sort of see if they can get the attention of their leaders.

So we're going to have baby-stroller brigades on November 4<sup>th</sup> on the Hill and say, you know, we're just looking for one good senator to take our position to protect children, to do this right for children. We're going to be having them around the country, and I will share the information which I hope you will share out. You can go to our website and get it.

I think that they need to confront their children and just say, "We can't find the money." They're saying we don't have the money. "We agree with you on substance, but we can't find that \$100 billion which our cost estimates say we need to get all these protections for all of our children. I do want all children [to be covered]...[but] we're not going to win [that fight]...[for] the undocumented children this year."

And that's crazy because if they all go to school—they didn't choose where their parents live. They didn't choose to come here. And if they're going to school, where they go, if they go to school, if they have a right to go, then they need to have health care because it really affects the public health of everybody, but we're not going to win that one. Okay. Sorry about that, but we will keep at it. And



in many other states we've been able to get state money and other funding for the undocumented because I believe that God did not make two classes of children, that every child's life is sacred, and one of these days the country will recognize that.

The main issue that we have is a way to pay for it. Well, we don't have a money problem in the United States. We have a values and a priorities problem. You saw how quickly we're talking about \$100 billion to reform the children's health care system and to give our children and our mothers prenatal care, \$100 billion over ten years. They say they don't have it.

Now, it took them a week or two weeks to bail out those irresponsible bankers for \$1 trillion. You know, they found that money quickly, didn't they? We spend \$2 billion—we spend in two months what we're trying to spend—in the military—what we're trying to spend on children in ten years.

We've got all kinds of subsidy systems. Somebody's up there trying to get—you saw they didn't get through—the “doc fix” through which was much more expensive than what we're trying to do even in one year than for ten years. The alternative minimum tax they're trying to put on budget—much more expensive than what we're trying to do in ten years in one year.

There're some folks that are trying to get the estate tax from the Bush years preserved for the people with—I think they are less than the people on my hand, just a few billionaires and millionaires who have estates worth \$3.5 million—they're trying to extend that estate tax off budget which would cost us taxpayers \$260 billion. Don't you let them tell you we do not have money. You tell them to find the money the same place they found the money for the bankers. Our children need to be bailed out on health care.

Please make your voices heard. We're going to have this chance at national health reform, and I want national health reform for everybody, but it also has to be right for children. We can make that happen, but it's going to take you standing up for children, speaking out for children.

I hope you will look at these baby brigades that we're going to be having around the country. If you're living here in Washington, come on with us on November 4<sup>th</sup>. But don't let time pass without doing something right for our children and making sure that they can start off in life with a healthy start. I appreciate the chance to share this with you.

**Dr. Foxen:** That was a very powerful speech. I am now so thrilled to introduce you to our very highly esteemed next speaker, Dr. Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, who has for the past three decades been one of the nation's leading academic researchers and writers in the area of Latino and immigrant children and youth.

Dr. Suárez-Orozco's research on immigration, education, and globalization appears in scholarly essays and books, including the award-winning books, *Learning A New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society*; *Latinos: Remaking America*; and *Children of Immigration*, among others, as well as over 100 scholarly papers appearing in diverse venues such as the *Harvard Law and Policy Review*; *Harvard Educational Review*; [and] the *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, among others.

Dr. Suárez-Orozco co-founded the Harvard Immigration Project with Carola Suárez-Orozco. He also taught the first course on Latino cultures at Harvard where his appointments also include the chair of Interfaculty Committee for Latino Studies [and] member of the Executive Committee of the Center for Latin American Studies.

Professor Suárez-Orozco is currently a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton and professor of globalization and education at NYU. He has won multiple awards and honors and

lectures widely throughout the world with major addresses at the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, and other global forums.

His research is regularly cited in the major global media including the *Economist*, the *New York Times*, NPR, and CNN and most of the major Latin American media.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Marcelo Suárez-Orozco.

**Dr. Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, Professor, Globalization and Education, New York University**  
**Fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton University**

Thank you, Patricia, for that wonderful introduction. It's the kind of introduction that my father would have liked and my mother would have believed.

**Latino Immigration and Education**



I first want to say how deeply honored I am. We come from a culture that reveres the elders, and sharing the stage with Janet and Marian Wright Edelman is truly a deep honor and I think an experience that I will cherish for a long, long time. What I would like to do in the remaining of our time together is to think through this moment of opportunity that the United States is facing today. We're at a proverbial fork here in our path.

I want to start with a reflection on how our country came to the current demographic state it is in, and as a point of departure I want to highlight a reality for Latinos in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Immigration is at the heart of the Latino experience in our country today. Forty percent of all Latinos are foreign-born, two-thirds of all Latinos are either foreign-born or the children—the U.S. citizen children—of the foreign-born growing up in our country. This is true for every major Latino subgroup.

As many as 66% of all Central American origins—Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans—living in the United States now are foreign-born, 60% of all Cubans, 60% of Dominicans, 40% of all Mexicans living in the United States. In two-thirds of all Latino families today the central dynamic in the family is the dynamic of immigration. But that's not the entire story.

Immigration is not [just] a U.S. issue today, no longer [just] a Latino issue or a Hispanic issue. Immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the human face of globalization. It is defining the demographic reality in every one of the high-income countries. It is no longer an American exceptional story.

Leicester, England, very soon, will be the first European city with a non-White majority. Frankfurt today is 30% immigrant. Rotterdam, the largest port in the heart of Europe today, is 40% immigrant. Amsterdam is going to be half immigrant before the end of the decade.

This is a reality of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the context of such heated debates about immigration, it's profoundly important to normalize this reality. Our country's history, the here and now, and as the data I'm going to show you this morning—data we all know very well— suggests, it is the future. Our country is one of a handful of countries where immigration is history, it's a reality in the here and now, and it is the destiny of our nation.

Our cities are more diverse in terms of languages, religion, ethnicities, and race than ever before. This is true in New York. It's true in LA. It's true in Chicago. It's true here in DC, but it is true literally all over the world. Diversity defines the reality in all high-income countries moving forward. It is not just the great cities, but smaller cities, mid-size cities are being transformed by large-scale immigration.

I wake in a city every morning where children from approximately 190 different countries and territories get up, get on buses, get on subways, go to school. That never happened before in the history of the world. Never before in the history of the world did one city contain the entire range of the human experience. This is a unique opportunity. This is at the very, very center of the democratic promise of the United States. Managing the transition of our immigrant origin population is at the very, very center. It's the test that will set the context for the kind of country we're going to become.

Then here is the first anthropological principle about immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's more diverse than ever before, yet the Latino-origin population in the United States is the engine that is driving this unprecedented demographic change.

But things change very, very fast. I think for a long time, I've been doing basic research in the field of immigration for three decades. We just invented a new term which is the "new new immigration." We used to talk about the new immigration which was (inaudible) 1965 when Latinos, Caribbeans, and Asians became the epicenter of the transformation taking place in the United States. I think that we're now in a "new new immigration" paradigm. Since 1990, approximately a million new immigrants entered the United States every year, a complex mix of authorized and unauthorized new arrivals.

There are two notable new developments here that we need to think about, what's new about the new immigration. In 2008, there were probably 100,000 fewer immigrants in the United States than in 2007. Immigration from Mexico, which is the engine driving our demographic change, dropped by as much as 13% in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the first quarter of 2008. According to some estimates, by 2008 there were probably about 11.4 million Mexicans living in the United States, for the first time less people than the prior year.

This, in fact, reverses a pattern of nearly three decades of Mexican and Latin American migration to the United States. This is in a way at the center of the changes that the economic debacle in the economy has generated.

When we think about the "new new immigration" to the United States, we think about the fact that 11 of the top 12 countries of immigration are now Latin American, Caribbean, or Asian. That, again, never happened before in the history of our country.

When we think about immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to think about the Latino condition and we have to think about the Latino family and the Latino experience. There are three Gs in the field of Latino immigration today: generation, geography, and gender.

We're very complex in terms of the generational dynamics. I taught the first course at Harvard College on Latino cultures in the United States, and I used to tell my students that many of the issues that are at the heart of our cultural sensibility, not just language issues but a variety of other issues, were flourishing in the United States before John Harvard founded Harvard College. That's the span of the origins in some profound ways that go way, way, way back historically, generations, as the facts, questions of authorized and unauthorized immigration, as it relates to language considerations that I'm going to share with you today, and as it relates to historical sensibilities and change in realities of our Latino communities.

Second, of course, is this profound demographic shift taking place in the United States, the second G of the Latino experience: geography. The Mexican migration wave has been at the center of an unprecedented shift away from the Northeast as the dominant population settlements in the United States and a movement increasingly towards the Southwest and the South. All our fastest-growing cities today and moving forward are going to be west of the Mississippi, and the Latino piece in that transformation is fundamental.

Of course, the issue of gender affects family life and affects changing patterns in the immigrant experience. Many of the data that you saw earlier today and that you will continue to be reflecting upon in the rest of our meeting will show that Latino boys are [facing] overwhelming obstacles as they're making their way through an increasingly complex economy and society that is global in scope and can no longer be framed as a national reality.

This is all taking place in the context of a second unprecedented phenomenon that the United States has not fully debated. The Latinization of the United States is taking place precisely at the time when 80 million baby boomers, the vast majority of them of White European origin non-immigrants, will enter the demographic end of their lives, the demographic winter of their lives in the next generation—80 million baby boomers.

We're facing a trans-generational asymmetry here that is at the very, very center, the 800-pound gorilla in the room. These are the children that Marian was talking about. This is the age-sex pyramid for the native-born Hispanic population of the United States as the fastest[-growing] sector of the U.S. child population. Concurrently, the Latino origin population of the United States, two-thirds of which are immigrants or the children of immigrants, is growing at an unprecedented rate.

When I started studying immigration, we used to say by the year 2050, 100 million Latinos will live in the United States. We keep moving the date closer and closer to the here and now. We now estimate that in fact by the year 2050, 138 million people will self-identify as Latinos in the United States.

The 800-pound gorilla here is: Will the massive asymmetry lead to a trans-generational rift where the White European origin population checks out of the social compact, or will there be a trans-generational solidarity between the aging White baby boomers and younger Latinos and a remaking of the American social compact?

That is culturally at the very, very heart of the condition we're facing as a nation in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Camino Real to the remaking of the social compact, indeed to the remaking of the American promise, will be strengthening the Latino family.

Our greatest resource and our most valuable cultural capital it is by very specifically investing in smart education, an education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century—not an education for the beginning of the 20th century—that will be the key to whether we can remake the social compact and move towards a realization of the promise of our cultural democracy.

There are many, many good reasons for investing in education. The data on this are very, very clear. The relationships between education, health, and well-being are increasingly understood and clearly conceptually framed. There are economic reasons for investing in education.

Investment in human capital is the best-known mechanism for generating the innovation that is the royal road to economic innovation and to the kind of general creative innovation that makes economies grow. That's one argument—education for labor market mechanisms, for mobility, for the creation of wealth, but that's not the only reason.

A second claim, or a second argument, might be [that] investing in education is smart for reasons of social cohesion, creating out of many one citizenry with a common purpose, shared sensibilities, a sense of common destiny which is needed to build a public sphere. *E pluribus unum*. Out of many, one. Education historically has been a powerful mechanism for the creation of that social compact.

But there's a third argument here that is a part of your discussions this morning and into this afternoon, and this has to do with health-related issues. In recent years, the research has [given us a] much better understanding of the mechanisms both proximal, immediate, and distal, long term.



For an understanding of how education—most specifically as mediated by literacy practices—generates health, well-being, and creates cycles, virtual cycles of development, autonomy, and wellness associated with each additional year of schooling and increasing rates of literacy, we see and we can map all kinds of health-related benefits.

But I think that there is another concern here that earlier we discussed as this pipeline between the cradle and the prison, a complex that is increasingly mediated by our failing schools, and that is the relationship between education and this dynamic that has no precedent in history. We are the only high-income country in the world that is incarcerating a huge number of our young adult population.

The statistical likelihood that an African American child born today will come into the supervision of the criminal justice system is much greater than the likelihood that he will end up in one of our colleges or universities in any one of our states. I think increasingly that is true for the Latino baby boys born today.

Education is a powerful mechanism to interrupt this general mechanism by which our schools are now becoming part of a school failure prison complex that is generating massive dystopia and is simply unsustainable for a culture of democracy in the long term, but I think there's a much more fundamental reason for investing in education. Education is what Latino families want. Putting aside the arguments of economists, putting aside the arguments of health scholars, putting aside the arguments of legal scholars working in the criminal justice system, the profound reality of the Latino experience is that survey after survey show that Latinos come out strongly endorsing education.

A study just released here two weeks ago by the Pew Hispanic Center found that nearly 90% of Latino young adults, ages 16 to 25, say that a college education is important to their success in life compared to 74% of the general population. There is no Latino ambition gap. We need to be very clear on that. There are barriers to Latino educational success, and those barriers are the barriers that will define what path we're going to take moving forward.

Look at what happens over time with 100 Latino children that enroll in elementary school. The barriers that Latino children face today include the lowest preschool attendance rates of any group in the United States, an achievement gap that we saw in the *New York Times* yesterday. The most recent study—we've known this since about 2001—an achievement gap that begins to form at about ages two and a half or three years of age. A barrier that by grades three and seven Latino children score two grades below national norms whether you look at the data on reading, whether you look at the data on math, whether you look at the data on a variety of tests.

In 2007, the most recent year for which we have data, Latino eighth graders on average achieved a reading grade that was much, much—by grade 12, Latino children were on average reading at an eighth-grade level.

The dominant effects for Latino children in our increasingly dysfunctional, dystopic schools is boredom and fear. These are the two effects that are not the best predictors of engagement or the best way to nourish the higher order of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills that children will need to compete in an increasingly globalized economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Latino immigrant youth who arrive as new migrants during adolescence are at a terrible disadvantage of dropping out of school if they ever drop into the system to begin with.

Research shows that Latino students who are in the third generation and beyond are well—have much higher dropout rates than that of comparable White non-Hispanic populations. Latino boys today have among the highest dropout rates of all groups in the United States. If you want to understand the new cradle-to-prison pipeline you need to understand this pipeline here because this is the



phantom pipeline. If you want to know what happens with the kids that are falling through the holes in this pipeline, you understand what our previous speaker was talking about earlier.

Latino children, both U.S.-born children of immigrants and newly arrived foreign-born students, have huge obstacles pertaining to the perfect storm, the high-stakes testing and the leave “no child left behind” has introduced into the school equation.

A pattern of triple segregation—segregation by language, segregation by poverty, and segregation by race—is now the elephant in the room in the Latino classrooms. Latino children are the most highly segregated children in America’s schools today.

There are multiple ways that the most important cultural resource of Latino family is being massively undermined by policy—by current policy implications.

The two big barriers for Latino youth relating to immigration and the family are the tremendous problems of family separations in Latino immigration and the issue of academic English-language proficiency as a factor determining how children will perform in standardized tests.

The undermining of the family in its legislative, social, and symbolic forms is the greatest threat Latinos face today. From deportations to the parents and family separation to the triple segregation and the enduring problem of poverty, these align into a perfect storm that is eroding Latino families and our ability to invest in children and the future.

The data that I’m showing you here is part of the most important finding from the largest study of its kind looking at how foreign-born Latinos arrive in the United States. What these data show is that family separations are normative in immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our policy mechanism is making family separations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century normal for the overwhelming majority of Latino children.

From whom was a child separated? There are significant differences between ethnic groups. We looked at Asian families. We looked at Caribbean families. We looked at Latino families. The circumstances of Asian, Chinese-origin immigrants, for example, are the most likely group to migrate as a unit, as a social unit, the entire family together.

The data on the other hand for our Central American groups—this includes families coming to the United States from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras—show breathtaking problems relating to protracted separations between children, their mothers, and their fathers. For Central American—origin children—and by the way, for Haitian-origin children—migrating to the United States imposes family disruption during migration in nearly all of the cases.

In nearly half of our sample, the children were separated from both parents. Note that this includes a separation as a direct result of immigration as well as the concurrent issues that often lead migrants to come to the United States, including death, including other concurrent issues in the country of origin. Here you see very, very powerful differences across groups.

Immigrant children today, as historically in the past, are the most likely to be separated from their fathers in the total of nearly 80% of the cases in our sample. In 96% of the Central American families and in 86% of all Dominican families, the children become separated from their fathers in the process of migration.

The second way in which current state policies are undermining the Latino family is through the emergence of these policy-mandated—I’m almost finished—relating to academic language acquisition. Even as we fail to recognize that academic language acquisition is a long process, it takes time. We do very little to maintain home languages, and Latino children today are losing Spanish at a rate that,

by the third generation, most Latino children cannot have breakfast with their grandmother in their native language.

In the context of an ever more globally integrated economy and society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, linguistic diversity is at the heart of a cultural asset of a nation, not a threat to its social cohesion, its sense of purpose, and its future.

Our data show that it takes approximately on average seven years of rigorous academic teaching and learning before children are ready to enter the high-stakes testing regime that today de facto becomes a part of their life, in many cases only after one year in the United States. As a result of that, if you look at the National Assessment of Educational Progress data, if you look at the data on the acquisition of English-language proficiency among Latino-origin children, foreign-born, and first-generation U.S.-born, you begin to understand the tremendous hurdles that children are facing.

Lastly, I would not be responsible if I did not mention the third factor that is profoundly undermining the coherence and the integrity of the Latino family, and that is of course the crisis of unauthorized immigration.

Today in our country four million children will go to schools—these are citizen children—who won't know when they come back home if their parents will be there waiting for them. Last year we deported 1.3 million people including an untold number of U.S. citizen children. The problem of undocumented status in immigration is a problem that is at the center today of roughly 40% of all Latino immigrants in our country.

The “DREAM Act” would be, of course, a most important issue for regularizing the condition and the situation of the children themselves. But I think, as a nation, we have a much, much bigger problem and a much, much more ambitious issue to take on.

Sink-or-swim policies for integration have basically left a lot of youth sinking. These are—if you want to understand the data on high school dropouts, if you want to understand the data on the tremendous pipeline problem to college at a time when a college degree is the primary mechanism for status and mobility in all of the high-income countries, you begin to see the long-term effects of our failure to support home language. Our failure to give the children and the families the tools they're going to need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We need to increase preschool opportunities. If you have an achievement gap that is already detected by linguistic tests by the second or third year of life, you need to mobilize way earlier. And you need to make sure that the cultural models and social practices in these preschool settings align with Latino cultural sensibilities, with our Latino cultural orientation which at the very, very heart is the notion of a better future for the children.

We need to think about education in a completely different paradigm. We're educating our children for an economy that no longer exists. We need to think about an education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our teachers in our schools and our colleges are completely unprepared today to deal with the realities of an ever more diverse student party. We need to redouble our efforts to make teacher education part of the system of policies for serving Latino children and families.

Second-language education, second-language acquisition takes time and a second language is an asset. It's not a threat in a democracy. We need to reconsider the regime of high-stakes testing for immigrant-origin children or we will continue to see a pattern of this engagement and school dropout that is no longer viable in terms of the economic implications for the long-term future of our country.

There are multiple opportunities. Many of you are working in these areas, so I don't need to emphasize those. I think our challenge is building on the cultural resource that the Latino family represents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are at a turning point here. We're at the proverbial path—a fork in the road. Which path we take will have a profound implication, not only for the Hispanic community. It will have a profound implication for the future of the United States. Thank you so much.

## Opportunities and Threats to Our Children's Future: Education and Juvenile Justice

**Dr. Patricia Foxen**, Associate Director, Research  
National Council of La Raza

We are going to move on to our afternoon panel on education and juvenile justice issues. It's titled "Opportunities and Threats to Our Children's Future." This panel will be followed by two breakout sessions on education issues, one on juvenile justice, and one on immigration issues. So it will be the same format as this morning where you...lend your own voice to these issues.

I'd like to welcome to the stage the moderator of the panel and the other panel members. Our moderator is Dr. Juan Sánchez who is the President and CEO of Southwest Key Programs. He has been a tireless advocate for Latino youth and their families. He is a nationally recognized leader in the field of juvenile justice and is a member of NCLR's Board of Directors. We are honored to have you moderating this panel.

**Dr. Juan Sánchez**, El Presidente/CEO  
Southwest Key Programs, Inc.  
National Council of La Raza Board of Directors

*Bien. Buenas tardes.* I think while we're getting all settled here, let me ask you, I don't want to lose any of you. Stand up and take a deep breath. Stretch your legs a little bit, your arms, say hi to your neighbor. Just, we ought to get some energy back here. You just finished eating [foreign phrase]. It's *siesta* time, I know, for many of us but just stretch, deep breath. We're going to try to move you through this very exciting session here. Very quickly, yes. All right, you can sit *por favor*. *Gracias*. Thank you all.

I want to welcome all of you to this next panel discussion. It's on—as you can see in the title in your program—it's not up there yet. All right, I'm going to get us to kind of just settle in because we have some wonderful speakers up here.

We have—this is Opportunities and Threats to Our Children's Future and is about education and juvenile justice. We have a wonderful panel of experts here this afternoon that I will be introducing in a minute. But I want to make a couple of introductory comments regarding this topic which has been very dear to my heart for many years.

My name is Juan Sánchez and I run an organization that for the last 22 years has actually devoted our lives to developing alternatives to incarcerating young people and also to developing alternative educational models for Latino youth to enable them to be successful.

Today's topic—I want to reiterate—it's about opportunities and threats to our children, our children's future, and it's about education and juvenile justice. I wanted to—as I was getting ready to come and give some introductory remarks, I was reminded of a poem that a very good friend of mine wrote many years ago. He passed away in 1996. His name was Lalo Delgado.

He wrote a very wonderful poem and I was going to editorialize it because I didn't want to offend anybody and I think I will. So just—there are two things. When I say the word “Latino,” he was writing in the early '70s so he used the word “Chicano.” And when I use the word “listen,” his word in there was “stupid.”

He says: Listen America. See that Latino with a big knife on his steady hand. He doesn't want to knife you. He wants to sit on a bench and carve Christ figures but you won't let him. Listen America. Hear that Latino shouting curses on the street. He is a poet without paper and pencil and since he cannot write, he will explode. Listen America. Remember that Latino flunking math and English. He is the Picasso of your Western states but he will die with 1,000 masterpieces hanging only from his mind.

I thought that was very appropriate when we talk about both education and juvenile justice this afternoon because these are two of society's institutions that intersect with Latino youth, but not in a very positive way.

The threats are obvious and they're being documented here this morning. The opportunities for Latino youth and the Latino future are sparse and limited, but we, as Latino leaders, have got to be the ones creating those opportunities so that our Latino young people can succeed.

On education, what has been said here, listen to the data. Over 50%—or close to 50% of Latinos drop out of school.... Now, when you talk about kids going to college, less than 1% of young people go to college and even less get a degree. And 1% may get a doctorate degree of every 100 Latinos starting school.

I think if we associate the word “success” with education or we believe that education equals success, this means that at least 50% of Latino youth are not going to be successful or not fulfilling their potential or not going to be able to accomplish their dreams. And there is a strong correlation between Latinos not doing good in school and winding up in the juvenile justice system. That's what the panel is going to be talking about this afternoon.

Before I turn it over to them and introduce them, one thing I also wanted to share with you is what NCLR has on the agenda for the initiatives of education and juvenile justice.

On education, the initiatives are around early childhood education and graduating from high school. In the juvenile justice arena what we've been doing for a little over ten years, they've been very instrumental in a couple of reports of which you'll hear about today. One is called *Dónde Está la Justicia?* And the other one is called *Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice*.

They've also been involved with the MacArthur Foundation in developing the Latino Juvenile Justice Network and are currently pushing very strongly to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) which will address the issue of overrepresentation of Latinos in the juvenile justice system and will also address the issue of not putting any Latinos in adult prisons.

So with that, let me introduce our wonderful panel of experts. I'm going to let you—you have between seven and ten minutes a piece. There will be questions. We'll have an opportunity to ask questions. There will be some index cards that will be passed on to you—some of you might have them already—for you to be able to ask any of the panelists up here. We are going to stay on time. I have been charged with that particular responsibility. We're going to try to stay on time so we can get you off to our breakout sessions after this and have you share your ideas and your thoughts about how do we move forward on the issue of education and juvenile justice.

The first speaker is going to be Roberto Rodriguez. And by the way, all of these people's résumés are in your packet so I'm not going to—I'm going to give them the time to speak instead of saying



too much about them. Just to say Roberto is a special assistant to the president on White House Domestic Policy Council; has done some work around the legislation on No Child Left Behind; has worked for NCLR actually as a policy analyst on education. He's a graduate of the University of Michigan and has a degree from the Harvard School of Education. *Bienvenido*, Roberto.

After him will be Francisco Villarruel. Those of us that know him, know him as "Chico." He is a professor of family and child ecology at the University of Michigan. He was very instrumental in those two reports that I talked about, *Dónde Está la Justicia?* and *Invisible Children*. He will be talking about that, but he has been a coauthor and provided information on that as an expert in juvenile justice. He's a friend. He's a scholar. And he's very knowledgeable about the issue of juvenile justice. So Francisco, welcome. *Bienvenido*.

Last, but not least, we will save the best for the last, our woman on the panel, Beatrice Garza. She is the Executive Director and the Chief Operating Officer of the AAMA, which is the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans. You saw a brief video that involved one of their schools and I will say she has been with—AAMA works with at-risk youth. So day in and day out, one of the things Beatrice is doing is changing the lives of children on a day-to-day basis on the ground. These are our panelists. First up, Roberto Rodriguez. Give him a welcome, please.

## **Roberto Rodriguez, Special Assistant to the President The White House Domestic Policy Council**

Thank you. Thank you so much. It's really a pleasure to join you, to come back to NCLR and to have the opportunity to speak briefly this afternoon about some of the activities around education that our administration is really committed to advancing and moving forward. To address a lot of the disparities that you've heard about over the course of this discussion, in particular from Dr. Suarez-Orozco who I think gave a great overview of the challenges that we're facing in terms of our children and our young people.

I'd like to speak very briefly about the work that's under way and the importance of addressing educational outcomes and really shoring up education reform as a key strategy for success for our young Latino children, youth, and their families.

Certainly in terms of our economy today, education really is no longer just a pathway to opportunity. It is a prerequisite in terms of success, and we know that the early childhood educational experiences that our young people have, the experiences they have in elementary and middle school and high school really make all the difference in terms of their future success and their ability to capture the American Dream. We also know that if we don't attend to those experiences and provide the scope of support and assistance that our young people need, we will be on the opposite end of that American Dream. Our panel I know will talk a bit about that more.

Our administration has approached this from an economic imperative. We know that our international competitiveness has slipped as is evidenced by a number of the measures in terms of performance of the U.S. respective to the PIMs, the [inaudible] data. There are countless indicators that show that we can and must do better.

In addition to this economic imperative, our administration approaches this education agenda as a matter of our test to really help deliver the American Dream for all students. And our test is to not only address the economic imperative here but the moral imperative recognizing that the strength of our

future and the strength of our democracy depends on our ability to really help all children realize their full potential and provide a complete and competitive education to each of our individuals from cradle all the way through a career.

That goal and that investment really begins by building a strong foundation for early success by improving the quality and expanding the scope of early learning opportunities. I know you heard earlier today from Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius about some of the work that's under way through our administration around early learning. That continues into reforming our elementary and middle schools, and our high schools, and providing the network of support that our young people need to be able to reach great standards but also excel and stay engaged. And then finally really providing the types of pathways that our young people need to be able to realize a higher education and continue on to a meaningful career.

Let me just begin, really briefly, with early childhood education. We know that here the research shows that early childhood, high-quality early childhood and early learning opportunities make all the difference for young children later in their school success as well as later in life.

We also know all the science that shows that the early years that children experience before kindergarten really are about their learning, their years that are formative in terms of nurturing children, challenging children, helping them engage in learning and appreciate their learning environments, their relationships with their parents and with other adults around them.

We know that we have millions of children every year that—or every day—that are spending some amount of time outside of the home. For our Latino children under the age of five, a growing segment of our children are spending some time in childcare and preschool education, but it still is a disproportionate share relative to their non-Latino peers.

Regardless of where our children are spending time, we know that the quality of that setting matters and we do have a long way to go with respect to addressing the quality across learning environments, whether it's childcare, Head Start, whether it's PreK, state-funded PreK, Title I, other types of early learning settings.

Regardless of the setting in which our children are spending time, the quality of that setting matters tremendously. We know that with high-quality environments we can get great outcomes in terms of reducing the need for special education, increasing the likelihood for high academic achievement, increasing the likelihood of graduation, which is what we have our eye set on for all of our young people. But we also know that we lack a systemic framework at the state level to really encourage higher standards and to improve outcomes for our youngest children.

For this reason we have embarked on this work through the Early Learning Challenge Fund and called for a national investment in a challenge to all states of \$10 billion over ten years to really invest in improving the quality and addressing the improvement of outcomes for our youngest children, zero to six. This is a challenge that the president issued earlier in the year to states, to step up and raise the bar in terms of the quality of their early learning programs and environments and to improve access in particular for our lowest-income children.

As we move into elementary and secondary education we know that we have a long way to go to provide our Latino students the opportunity that they need, the full opportunity that they need to be able to learn to high standards.

The first piece is around ensuring that we challenge all states to commit to more rigorous and relevant standards. Back when the president addressed a group at the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce earlier this year, he spoke about the importance of really challenging states to do more to raise the

rigor of their standards. Make sure that those standards are relevant, that they deliver, not only the types of core academic content that we need in reading and in math but also the types. They instill the types of skills that our young people need to be able to graduate college and be career-ready. That they are helping our young people really build their problem-solving skills, building their communication skills, helping address their critical thinking, leadership skills, all the skills that we know are important to the new and changing workforce moving forward.

So our Race to the Top initiative is an unprecedented competition that's inviting states to join together in developing a framework of reform that's predicated on high standards but also on effective teaching and learning, on addressing support and providing support for our most struggling schools. Race to the Top looks at inviting states to adopt these common core rigorous and relevant standards, in helping transform their entire system to meet those standards.

A lot of that really also involves doing better with respect to the quality of assessment. We know that we need to move beyond kind of the fill in the bubble, single snapshot of student learning to be able to provide a better, more sophisticated picture of how our children are progressing, how our children are growing academically.

We also know that one of the single most important things that we can provide a young person in school today is a highly qualified and effective teacher. That the quality of teaching in the classroom matters greatly, and we know that because we've seen tremendous amounts of growth and progress where our young people are paired with talented and effective teachers.

We are making an unprecedented commitment to improving the quality of teaching across the board, developing new pathways to recruit and retain effective teachers, and really looking at how we can improve the compensation systems, the evaluation systems, the preparation systems for our teaching workforce to transform teaching and move it into this century.

This is a tremendously important goal in particular, for our English language learners who really need access to highly qualified teachers that not only are effective in delivering content to those young people, but also that help them develop second-language acquisition, that can help them develop proficiency in their native language, that can help them develop proficiency and attain academic proficiency in English.

Finally, our K-12 agenda seeks to address head on the crisis that we have with respect to our nation's dropout problem. Here we are losing nearly 30% of our young people before they reach the high school gymnasium and are able to walk across with a high school diploma. That is a recipe that is going to lead toward disaster rather than success with respect to our nation's competitiveness moving forward.

We've embarked upon a new process for school improvement that targets our lowest-performing schools to really provide intensive resources as well as a framework of support for those schools and a framework of reform for those schools. We know that about 2,000 schools in our nation account for over half of our nation's dropouts. That's a troubling statistic, but it's also a statistic that suggests that this problem is solvable.

We can, with the right mix of resources and reform, turn the corner in these schools. And that really is about providing more individualized attention to our young people in middle and high school, identifying our over-aged under-credited students early, providing them alternative pathways and the help and the support that they need to be able to continue to work toward their high school diploma, and ultimately to be able to secure a meaningful career.

I'm going to wrap it up, and I look forward to having a discussion. Thanks so much for the opportunity to join you.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Let's give him a hand. Good job. Good job. Francisco?

## **Dr. Francisco Villarruel, Professor of Family and Child Ecology Michigan State University**

Throughout the day there have been a couple of visioning exercises and questions that have been posed, so now I would like to pose one of those questions. What will it take for us—not only us in this room, but everybody in this nation—to elevate the priority and the status of juveniles to facilitate developmental opportunities that promote their successful transition to adulthood?

Most of this nation, when you talk about juveniles, talks about those kids. Schools say it's the family's fault. Families say it's the school's fault. Juvenile justice programs, well, if the schools and families had done their business, we wouldn't have this problem.

Let's go back in history, July 4, 1899. It's when the first juvenile justice system program in the United States was established in Cook County, Illinois. It was established for one reason: One person had the vision that juveniles could be rehabilitated, that if you gave them a second chance, they could do something, they could be something.

Fast forward to 2004, the Supreme Court decision *Roper v. Simmons* that ended the juvenile death penalty in the United States. It was based on brain research that said the brains of juveniles, the logical reasoning isn't fully developed. Maybe we need to slow down and look at what we can do to promote opportunities for them. Instead we've replaced it with life without parole. Kids are losing their lives for stupidity.

If we woke up this morning and did a census of prisoners in the United States, we would recognize that there are over 2.2 million in prison in the United States today. Consider the fact that the U.S. has 5% of the world's population. We have 20% of the world's incarcerated people. Consider the fact that, today, over 100,000 Latino youth are in an adult prison where they don't have education, where they don't have mental health, where we have thrown them away.

In the report that's outside, *America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice*, which itself is a controversial title, was done by intent to provoke some thought because we have to ask a question: Why is it that this society believes that all Latino youth have an equal probability of moving into the justice system?

If you look at the federal data, it implicates what is happening in this country. It is not immigrant youth that are entering the system; it's our third- and fourth-generation youth who are entering the system.

Now, here's an ironic question that I want to go back and ask again. Schools are applauded for graduation rates. Juvenile justice system programs that don't rehabilitate and contribute to the recidivism of youth get what? More beds, more money, more staff. When are we going to elevate this to the national priority that it needs to be?

In 2002, *Dónde Está la Justicia?* was released. For some, that may not be an important document. For some it is an important document. For me, it ... is ironic that in 2002 it represented the first-ever national analysis of Latino youth in the juvenile justice system.



Thank you to the Building Blocks [for Youth Initiative], the Youth Law Center for really pushing us to do this work because it finally put us in a place where we needed to be. While there are estimates of what the data are and the number of youth, they're underrepresented because not everybody counts us and we're counted differently.

So part of what I want you to walk away with is this perception that our Latino youth who are involved in juvenile justice programs chronically miss-fit in society. If not, what is our responsibility as advocates, as educators, as social workers, as researchers to promote the developmental opportunities that are needed for youth to survive?

I just want to do a quick exercise to leave you. I've never done this before but I came up with a stupid idea. Juan, you can take it and use it whenever.

How many of you would like this \$100 bill? Okay. Wait a second. How many of you would still like this \$100 bill? Wait a minute. Wait. I'm going to pour some water on it, spill this coffee on it. I'm going to wipe in a few places where it shouldn't be wiped in public.

This is the juvenile that we have to deal with daily. Has the core changed? What can we do as a society and as a community? What can NCLR do to bring this back to its full righteous self? Maybe with some wrinkles, but it still has a value that we all want.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Beatrice. *Muchas gracias*, Francisco. Beatrice, go ahead.

## **Beatrice Garza, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer** **Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans**

What an analogy. In 1970, a small group of professionals in Houston founded the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA). The reason was that Houston had just gone through desegregation and they were making sure that the White children were all taken care of and everything was in place and they were taking care of the Black children who had been segregated for years and years and years. All of us in the community were saying, "What about ours?" The community had to put in place after-school programs, summer programs, tutoring programs for ours.

For 39 years we've been in business in Houston and in Texas because we have locations in multiple cities and we served thousands of our youth improving their lives. But guess what? Thirty-nine years later what has Houston got? A problem with dropout rates, a problem with Latino children who are not getting the best education available. They deserve the best education available.

The research shows it. We're not here to discuss whether or not the dropout rate is a path to the justice system. You want to see the stats? I'll tell you the websites. We have one in Texas that's an awesome research piece done by Texas Appleseed and it talks about Texas schools being a pipeline to incarceration.

What we need to do today is talk about what we are going to do to change what's causing children to drop out of school. What are we going to do to change what's causing Latino children to act up in school because it's cooler to be bad than to be stupid?

Our children are being tagged "special ed" at disproportionate rates. Our children are being tagged as discipline problems at disproportionate rates. That's what we need to address. Why is that happening and how are we going to stop it?



At AAMA we provide a program that serves the whole child. We run charter schools with wraparound services. We have at our facility—I'm going to talk about the Houston facility. I think you saw in the video some of our San Antonio staff and children. We mirror the facilities at those two locations.

At Houston we have a charter school that serves seventh through twelfth graders. On that campus we have a daycare for our teen moms. On that campus we have a residential program for teen boys ages 13 to 17 who have already had some of the these judicial system issues but are in the process of transitioning back to their homes and back into their neighborhoods, and they come to us, they go to school in the morning. In the afternoon, they have intensive counseling that's very specific to their individual needs. They spend 90 to 120 days with us.

On our campus we have a pediatric clinic. We partnered with Texas Children's Hospital. It is a pediatric office like the one you take your children to. It provides health care for our teen parents' children and it provides health care and preventative care for our community's children. It is on a sliding scale.

We must take care of our children in a holistic manner. We can't just address dropouts. We can get all the kids and bring them back to school to the same situation. What good is that going to do?

AAMA is an open charter. Many charters say they are. We truly are. With me is one of our counselors. He can verify and attest that we turn away no child. We must address the fact that today policies in schools are made to serve the adults in the education system. We take a child who's dropped out two or three times. It is not to our advantage as an organization to take that child because I trust we will not be able to graduate them in four years. The graduation rate says you graduated them at four years. So it's not to our advantage but it is the right thing to do. It is to the advantage of that child and that family that we give them another chance.

Our high school, our middle school is for many of our children their last chance for a diploma from high school. This year we graduated our first young woman who graduated within a week with her high school diploma and an associate of arts from Houston Community College. Thank you.

Our program takes the child where they are. We have the traditional high school curriculum. We have a GED program. We have college-bound dual-credit programs. We provide a holistic approach to the child because we know that if we do not do that, if we have just the traditional setting, they're not going to stay with us. They've already dropped out.

I was in a classroom the first week of school. It was a middle school. Actually, it was a ninth grader, and I asked him why he was with us. He said, "Miss, because my mom said you won't let me leave." Then he goes to say he had been at a middle school. He had gone to school. Then he hadn't gone back after November. I don't remember exactly the month.

The next year, his mom sent him back to that middle school—and this is the public school district in Houston—and after Christmas, during Christmas break he decided he wasn't going to go back. The little boy next to him said, "Tell her. Tell her. Tell her. Tell her. Tell her." He said, "Last year I went to school until May and two weeks before school ended, I dropped out." He said, "But here, Miss, they tell me you'll come get me," and our staff goes and gets them.

If they miss a day, they're called. When they miss the second day, they're called. The truancy officers go to the home. Whatever it takes to keep the child in school is what we must do, but the public school system is doing whatever it takes to facilitate the classroom for the majority.

Our children are acting up because they've been told they're stupid because they don't speak the English language. Our kids are acting up because they're very poor and they don't dress like

everybody else. Our kids are acting up because that's where they come from—an environment of adults that misbehave.

We're not here to say that zero tolerance should not be in place for a child who brings a knife or a gun or has violently hurt someone on the campus. We don't want that to happen. But we're here to say, what could a prekindergarten child do? What could a kindergarten child do that caused the system to send them to a disciplinary alternative education program?

Those schools, the disciplinary alternative education programs, have five times the dropout rate of the traditional school. Those programs aren't working. Those programs aren't working for any child who isn't doing what they're supposed to be doing in the traditional classroom whatever color or age they are, but those are the programs that we're continuing to encourage.

We have 600 children at our high school in Houston today. We serve 690 kids, but because we serve from seven weeks old to the adult, 600 is the seventh through twelfth [grade]. Thirty-nine of those today are teen parents. Approximately 10% or lower have already been either adjudicated—they are on probation or they've served their time.

I am here to tell you that at AAMA it works. It works to take the kid no one else wants. We have partnerships in Houston, one of which is KIPP. I work very closely with Mike. He says, "We love AAMA. You take the kids we don't want."

But what is it going to take for all of us to say, these are our children? As you said earlier, it's not those children. It's our children. And if we do not focus on our children, our future during our retirement will be very, very bleak.

I'll share a little bit more of the wraparound services very quickly. We also have adult programs in that same facility at that same campus for our parents, for our student parents. We also have GED and English and Spanish for them, and we have some workforce programs. Our goal is to increase our workforce programs for not only our parents but our teens because we know that's where our funding is going, and to continue to focus on the fact that we are a last choice, and to continue to show to others that it works. Thank you.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Beatrice, *gracias*. Thank you. Let's give all the panel another round of applause, please. *Gracias*, Roberto, Francisco, Beatrice. Thank you very much.

We're going to have a little bit of time for some questions. How much time do we have here for questions? About ten minutes. So you have them all ready? Bring them up since they're ready to go.

Okay. All right: "For us in the mental health community, juvenile justice has become the psych hospital or psych institution of this generation. Any suggestions?"

The question, there's two questions. I'm going to ask that one.

**Dr. Villarruel:** In some respects I believe it goes back to the comments that Marian Wright Edelman was talking about. In some of our communities this is the only option that we have. So part of the question that we need to come back with is—given that the system is supposed to focus on youth who have behavioral issues—is this the environment that will foster their development and transition or is there something that we can do better?

One of the things I didn't talk about was the JJDPa reauthorization. I just want to make two statements on that real quick because it fits into this statement. One of the things that we've talked about in almost every publication is that where juvenile justice failed is where we don't have culturally

competent practices. But you represent the organizations that are doing it. The government is telling us you have to use evidence-based practices, but as Juan and I both say, the problem with evidence-based practice is they kept us out of the evidence so until you start documenting what you're doing successfully—and we can integrate this in the JJDPa—we're going to be caught in the same system.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Yes. I would say you're correct, whoever asked this question. The only way that some of our kids get any mental health services is by sending them to the juvenile justice system. The reality though is the juvenile justice systems do not provide mental health services for kids, for the majority of kids, which is also documented. What needs to be happening is that we've got to begin to push for mental health services to be available to our communities that are outside of the criminal justice system. Roberto?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Juan, just one quick comment here. To the issue of prevention—and Francisco made this point—this cannot be our only resort in particular for our young people. We need greater pathways and greater programs that integrate services for our young people that address from a prevention perspective the impacts of toxic stress in their communities, in families that clearly have impacts on their academic outcomes. We've been really encouraged and we're pursuing some of these models through our high school graduation fund that was part of the FY [20]10 budget.

We've been very encouraged by strategies that have really sought to address the whole child by providing wraparound services in middle and high schools where we integrate mental health counseling, where we integrate social and emotional development, and where we integrate mentoring apprenticeships, internships. Really help engage young people in their process of learning but address their comprehensive development, which is something we do in the early childhood context quite well. We talk about social and emotional development alongside cognitive development. We lose that focus in elementary and the secondary grades in particular, and we need to get that back.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Yes. I think you're correct. That's what Beatrice, I think, was saying—when a child needs mental health services we're not going to send him to the juvenile justice system. We're going to deal with him right here in the school, in the community, to provide those services for them.

**Ms. Garza:** Right.

**Dr. Sánchez:** And it works.

**Ms. Garza:** And it works.

**Dr. Sánchez:** And it works. All right, the other question here is another question that says, "Federal agencies receive a lot of money for K-12 science education. How can we make them more effective?" I guess saying, we receive all this money but we're not very effective in the science arena and the math arena. I guess we could throw those together.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Right, and that's true. We have slipped in terms of our competitiveness, and other nations internationally are outpacing us in the STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math] field, in science, engineering, mathematics and technology.

We really have three goals here that we're trying to pursue as an administration. One is to improve the STEM literacy among our elementary and middle and high-schoolers that is, not only just deepen their knowledge base in science, math, and engineering but really help expose them more to those subjects and other subjects in their language arts course, in their social studies courses, so that we can deepen an appreciation for STEM learning.

The second is really to look at what we can do to promote effective teaching in math and science and technology. Here we need a reinvigoration of these subjects and of teaching in these subjects because the young people that are in school today even look different than when I was going through school.

The applications around technology, whether it's Facebook, whether it's other social networking sites, whether it's texting, whether it's—all of these things that are at the disposal of a young person when they're out of school, we always ask them to check all of those things at the door when they come into school. We need new strategies to really be able to reinvigorate the teaching of those subjects and help our teaching workforce to use those modes of communication with our young people.

Thirdly, we really need to do more to promote the advancement of women, of girls, and of Latino students and other students of color in math, science, engineering, and technology in particular in the advanced fields and in particular in these professions. Here we have a lot of great work that's under way through our minority-serving institutions to really open those pathways of advanced study, and we're committed to growing those and investing in more of those as we move forward.

**Dr. Sánchez:** Okay. I think what I'm going to do is end there. Again, thank you to the panel. Another round of applause, please.

## Wrap-Up

### **Eric Rodriguez, Vice President, Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation** **National Council of La Raza**

Thank you everyone. Certainly, a great thanks to the youth and the adults who came out today.

I am here to close the day out. If you have seen the agenda and you have lived through it, you will realize that was our rendition of *Survivor*, the show, and you have actually survived if you are still here. It was quite a day, packed with many activities. A lot of thanks go to all of you for sharing with us all of your wisdom and experience and bearing with us through this day. We really do appreciate that.

We also need to thank our supporters and funders, The Atlantic Philanthropies. We could not do this, convene all of you and bring you all together, without their support as well as the Kellogg Foundation and other funders. Our thanks go to them as well, to our speakers who did a great job today, to the youth themselves who contributed.

Again, we cannot say enough about what they did today and how they contributed in all of the breakout sessions as well as the performance here. You will see in all of our research the voices of Latino youth and children, which is very important to us.

Certainly, thanks goes out to the NCLR staff for a great event. For many of you who do not know, this was seven months in the making, and so it is a great pleasure for us to finally be here and meet all of you.

The numbers, the data, and the research can be very cloudy, so a big part of what we wanted to do today is to make sure we really injected the voices, the perspectives, the attitudes, and views of youth and children and families. We added to that the experience of all of our participants, their wisdom and guidance, hoping to clear a real path for us.

There were some stark impressions that we were left with as we went through the day. These are the things that we should not forget as we walk away from this forum.

The first is that if we do nothing, half of all poor children in the United States by 2030 will be Latino. You heard from Marian Wright Edelman that children do not come in pieces, that we really need a comprehensive and holistic approach to our intervention.

You heard from Jim Weill earlier this morning; 90% of pregnant women in Los Angeles are now on the Women, Infants, and Children program. There is medicine out there, but often in insufficient doses.

You heard Janet tell us about the road that we're on and the long road ahead of us from this point forward.

You heard from a young woman in the video who finds herself in an intervention program that works for her in part, in large part, because her mother pushes her to make her dreams come true.

We heard from youth all day long that they are up to the challenge in schools and out of school. They want to be challenged. They welcome that.

The voices of Latino youth ring true for all of us. I, myself, grew up in poverty in Brooklyn, New York, with a single parent, raised in an unsafe neighborhood, educationally challenged. In fact, I do not tell



many people this, but I actually studied in auto mechanics high school. I was a bad mechanic. In fact, I never dreamed that I would be here today with the opportunity to do something about these issues.

For many of us, this is a calling and also a duty that brings us here today and that will propel us forward from this day ahead.

Janet is right. We are on a long journey and road. I do not just say that because she is my boss. I say that because it is true. We will one day very soon look back into our rearview mirror and see this forum grow smaller and smaller in our memories while we look ahead in the windshield and see our aspirations grow closer and closer.

Along the way, we look forward to working with each and every one of you along that path. You have my sincere—and on behalf of my own staff and my institution—our sincere and heartfelt thanks for all the work that you do, for all your contributions, and for the work that's left to be done. Thank you.