

**Perceptions of Piedmont Area  
*African Americans and Latinos*  
of Each Other and of the  
Beloved Community Center's  
Black-Brown Alliance**

A Collaboration of the  
Beloved Community Center,  
JPS 339 Research Methods Students  
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# Responses of African American Participants

# Responses of African Americans Perceptions of Latinos

- Admire Latinos' hard work, strong community and family ties . . .
  - *I think Latinos are really hard workers and they want the good things in life. They want a chance to be Americans.*
  - *'Fast nickels are better than slow dollars.' They work cheap and do the job. Over a longer period of time, that little bit adds up.*
  - *On the job, they study what they are doing and learn all the skills and then teach them to others.*
  - *They live together in small communities to save money*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of Latinos

- have empathy for Latinos' struggles
  - *They don't get the same education we're allowed to get because a lot of them are undocumented and not allowed to attend colleges and universities*
  - *Hispanics are so intimidated by the system itself that they avoid doctors and self-diagnose until the hospital emergency room becomes the last resort.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of Latinos

- Empathy and admiration are tempered by feelings of competition for scarce resources— jobs, education, health care.
  - . . . they're taking the African American man's job. They come over here and work for nothing. I can't get a job making minimum wage if they'll do the work and get paid under the table for two dollars less.
  - They done took over the emergency room. You can't go in there and understand nothing going on. It feels like Little Tijuana in there.
  - I guess the fight is who will be the majority in the minority race.

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of Latinos

- Also feel that Latinos need to learn English, and 'fit in'
  - *I feel they need to learn our language a little better. I feel like it's secret conversations going on sometimes and I want to hear what is being said.*
  - *They all think they better than us. They come over here . . . and try to treat us like we don't belong. Hell I didn't choose to be here, they did, so they need to live like us.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

- Perceptions of causes of tensions between African Americans and Latinos

### **1. Media and police inflame tensions and mistrust**

- *You know, the media has a way of being divisive when it comes to its reporting of black folks and Hispanic folks relating to each other.*
- *Now they (Latinos) told me that white police officers tell them not to trust any Blacks because they will hurt or take advantage of them and they are nothing but trouble and they steal.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

### 2. Powerful Whites control scarce resources for which Latinos and African Americans compete

— *When I went downtown to get help, s\_\_\_\_, the white folks wouldn't give me a dime, but there they [Latinos] were, sitting in there smiling because they knew they were going to get what they wanted.*

— *Whites are more susceptible to fund Latino organizations than Black ones. We have two programs, one is Latino Endowment and the other is Black Endowment. Whites support the Latino program, but not the Black program.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

3. This competition, and buying into stereotypes pits African Americans and Latinos against each other

- *All of the stereotypes of Blacks have trickled down to Latinos.*
- *The attitude toward Latinos is that of an 'uppity negro' --they are not better than us. This stems from a 'crabs in the barrel' mentality.*
- *We [Blacks and Latinos] put ourselves into these categories . . . And then we can't get to know each other better or build relationships because we cling to the stereotypes that have existed for years.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

4. Whites use this power to 'divide and conquer' African Americans and Latinos, to keep the status quo
  - *We have learned that Caucasians have mastered 'divide and conquer' and that has been allowed to happen and it holds us back.*
  - *I think that Whites have a fear: 'Blacks and Latinos are very similar,' and whites are afraid of the progression of Blacks. This is why they're turning Blacks and Latinos against each other.*
  - *Stockton (1995) found that the two groups who are in the minority, African Americans and Latinos, are pitted against one another in order to keep them from combining and gaining power.*

Black-Brown Unity Rally in Los Angeles in 2006 to protest Minutemen efforts to recruit African Americans against Latino Immigrants



# Responses of African Americans

## Commonalities & Benefits of Uniting

- In spite of efforts to divide, perceptions of strong commonalities, and an awareness of benefits of uniting
  - *Blacks and Latinos are treated the same. Testing scores represent that. Tests cater to Whites. No Child Left Behind pushes Blacks and Latinos out.*
  - *Since we both seem to be underdogs, just maybe we can work together to break up some of the hold that the upper class whites have over us.*
  - *The two communities need to expand the pie . . .we need to be owners of jobs and not just workers fighting over the crumbs of the pie.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Subgroup trends

- Trends in the responses of different subgroups
  - Working class participants more angry and frustrated about losing jobs to Latinos.
  - Middle class participants focus more on learning Latino culture, and rationalize Latinos' getting jobs
  - Clergy concerned about betterment of mankind as a whole, desire to reach out more to Latinos, but are limited by language barrier

# Responses of African Americans

## Feelings about conference

- Most participants strongly in favor of Black/Brown conference
- **37 of 39 participants said they would attend**
  - *I think it's a wonderful idea, it is needed badly, and I can't think of any other idea that is needed this bad.*
  - *Will they be there? Can we speak to each other?*  
*[interviewer: yes] YEAH!*
  - *If it is the season for us to come together, if it's God's time, we gonna blend.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Feelings about conference

- And yet some participants skeptical . . .
  - *Good in theory, but won't work in reality. Latino is not one group. There is Latino division.*
  - *Both communities need that unity first before we can merge the two. Good vision, but it won't work.*
  - *If we don't accept each other's culture, then it will be difficult to be united.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Feelings about conference

- . . . and a couple totally opposed
  - *Don't nobody give a damn about a bunch of niggers and spics getting together. We all just a bunch of niggers who ain't gone never be able to change how them crackers run the whole damn world.*
  - *F—ck no. They take our jobs, they take our money, they TAKE, they TAKE, they take everything.*

# Responses of African Americans

## Recommendations

- Recommendations for Black/Brown Conference
  - *Focus on a cause, like better education, school safety, anything for the children.*
  - *It would take a 'way strong' powerful influential leader.*
  - *Have the conference on the weekend.*

# Responses of Latino Participants

# Responses of Latinos Perceptions of African Americans

- People with more interaction with African Americans had more positive things to say
  - *I have had the same type of experiences with Blacks that I have had with any other group of people. All people are the same—Blacks, Whites, Latinos. I have always worked alongside Blacks, and I got along with them, the same way I get along with anybody.*
  - *People are just people. Color doesn't make a difference. I see people as people, just like me.*

# Responses of Latinos Perceptions of African Americans

- Yet, strong general perception that African Americans are doing better than in the past, but still have a 'chip on their shoulder'
  - *In general, Blacks have come a long way—from their roots as slaves in the early days. They have lots more opportunity, more benefits. They carry a chip on their shoulder. They feel they've never overcome being slaves . . . They want us to feel sorry for them-- 'we have it rough.'*
  - *In our business I have found some Blacks have a chip on their shoulder. They feel we owe them because they are Black.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of African Americans

- Strong perception also that African Americans are angry at Latinos for 'taking their jobs', but that African Americans don't really want these jobs
  - *One reason African Americans resent Hispanics is that the Hispanics are taking jobs. Hispanics say "you don't want to do it, you want to live on welfare and social programs." I hear a joke among Hispanics, 'If an American doesn't want to do a job, there are 10 Mexicans waiting for that job.'*
  - *Blacks think Hispanics cause job displacement. This might be true. Hispanics are hard workers . . . and do take jobs and opportunities because Hispanics want them and Blacks don't like to do these jobs.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of African Americans

- Belief that African Americans can get more benefits than Latinos, and that they 'play the system'.
  - *Housing is easier for Blacks to get because Hispanics use cash and no credit cards. This makes it harder for Hispanics to get a house with no credit. ...healthcare is easier for Blacks to get—we get no Medicare. We make too much money, no help, we don't meet the standards to get help.*
  - *Hispanics are much more affected by healthcare than Blacks, because they are undocumented and foreign. They often get offered benefits at their jobs but don't apply because they are undocumented and might get sent back.*
  - *African Americans know what they can get and they play the system*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

- Perceptions of causes of tensions between African Americans and Latinos
  1. African Americans are angry at Latinos for taking jobs and benefits
    - *Blacks are very jealous, insecure with Hispanics.*
    - *When I worked in factories, I worked with a lot of Blacks. There was a lot of tension. The Blacks thought we were taking their jobs. I didn't like working there because of the tension.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

2. North Carolina is more segregated, less multicultural, than other places, leading to misunderstanding and divisions

- *In Miami, there are many nationalities. When I moved to North Carolina, I was called a minority. People look down on us when we moved here. All believe in stereotypes about us. . . . This (stereotypes) goes both ways.*
- *I grew up in New York. All were ok, “mixed up.” Here, it’s polarized . . . . They have the Blacks here and Latinos here, Whites here. There’s no understanding of the other’s culture or world. There’s no understanding among them. It’s segregated.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

### 3. News media and movies contribute to Latinos' stereotypes and fear of African Americans

- *. . . in the movies, African Americans are the bad guys. I brought that image of them and prejudice here with me. I was nervous. Suspicious. I was nervous to interact with African Americans at first.*
- *Latinos feel threatened by Blacks. It is very unfortunate. I think much of the cause of the problems between Blacks and Hispanics is because of the media. The media makes Blacks seem different.*
- *Weil & Castaneda (2004) found that the media often provide the only source of information about one group, such as Latinos, available to another group such as African Americans, who lack significant contact with each other .*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

4. Context of hostility and threat of deportation creates strong fear and mistrust in Latinos

- *There is a lack of national leadership and a rise of anti-immigrant feeling and legislation, which limits access and sends a mainstream message of hate. There is a sense of fear and uncertainty and a sense of mistrust between immediate family and informal networks, and everyone else. This mistrust worsens conditions between communities.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Perceptions of causes of tensions

### 5. The language barrier contributes to this mistrust

- *Mostly Black people will talk crap about Hispanics because they think we do not speak English.*
- *I think that the minute that we walk into the office [for benefits], people are like, oh my God, get the Spanish-speaking person in here, and we do not get the same treatment as others.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Divisions among Latinos

- Tensions and divisions among Latino groups, partly due to racism, could make it hard for African Americans and Latinos to come together.
  - *Even among Hispanics, racism is among us too because of differences. Puerto Ricans don't like Mexicans who don't like Cubans. Ethnicity is an issue. There are Black Latinos, Asian Latinos, White Latinos. We need to overcome that as well. We can hardly get together ourselves.*
  - *And educated Hispanics have prejudice too. We think that the more White you are, the better you are. In our context (country of origin), the whiter people are the ones in government, and the ones with money.*
  - *Kaufman (2003) found racial differences among diverse Latino groups. Latinos aren't united and don't demonstrate strong bonds with one another. If African Americans and Latinos want to merge, Latinos must become more inclusive with each other.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Commonalities and Shared Struggles

- Participants also see what Latinos and African Americans have in common
  - *I see a similarity in the struggles between African Americans and Latinos. Also there is a similarity in the history of resistance. My family has lived in the U.S. for four generations, and I know of instances where my people were burned, lynched, segregated in the U.S. This parallels the experience of African Americans. My personal feeling is one of identification.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Subgroup trends

- Trend in the responses of different subgroups
  - Middle class participants more aware than working class participants of the similarities in the struggles in education, healthcare, and housing faced by Latinos and Blacks.

# Responses of Latinos

## Feelings about conference

- Most are in favor of a African American/Brown conference
  - 20 out of 21 participants think it's a good idea; 15 out of 21 would attend the conference
    - *The Hispanics and Blacks can accomplish a lot. A conference would be great—it can help the young with hatred.*
  - Several believe that it will be challenging
    - *I think that it's a very good idea. There is so much mistrust between the two groups. But it could be the start of some good things.*
    - *I would definitely attend such a conference and would like to be a part of organizing it. This is an extremely important dialogue. It's not going to be easy. Some clergy are very sensitive about too many immigrants.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Feelings about conference

- 2 might attend the conference, depending on the time and topic
- 4 would not attend
  - *It would be a waste of time.*
  - *I don't think anything positive would come out of it. It's like getting the Blacks and the KKK together. Nothing good will come of it.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Feelings about conference

- Several mentioned that people might not attend the conference because of fear
  - *I don't know if the people I know would come. I think they would be scared, like it's a set up or nothing would be made good of it.*
  - *I heard on the news starting in May that the police are going to start stopping us and asking us for our papers. If this happens, the Beloved Community Center will never be able to hold their conference because everyone will be too scared.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Recommendations

- Recommendations for the conference
  1. *Consider including Whites in a coalition at some point*
    - *A Black-Latino conference is key, but right along with that, where is the space for Whites? The conference can be a building block for a tri-racial, multi-faith effort*
    - *I would love for the conference to happen, but not just Hispanics and African Americans.*

# Responses of Latinos

## Recommendations

### 2. Include Latinos in planning the conference

- *This is a needed conference, but there must be intentional inclusion of Latinos. Not just planning by African Americans and European Americans, but invite Latinos to participate or it won't work.*

# Limitations of the Project & Suggestions for Further Research

- Smaller number of Latino participants
  - A larger number of Latino participants would have given greater depth and breadth to findings.
- Absence of Latino researchers
  - Latino participants probably would have been more open with Latino researchers
  - Latino researchers probably would have seen additional or different patterns and themes in the findings
- Having a White team leader may have led participants to be less open and impacted the findings

# Limitations of the Project & Suggestions for Further Research

- To address these concerns, future research to support a Black-Brown Coalition can:
  - Include Latino and African American researchers
  - Be co-led by a Latino/a and African American