



The Concerns of the Hard-to-Count Communities

***Summary from the Undercount Summit
And the Hispanic Federation Forum***

18 January 2000

**U.S. Census Monitoring Board
Congressional Members**
4700 Silver Hill Road
P.O. Box 610
Suitland, MD 20752
(301) 457-5080
www.cmbc.gov
email: feedback@cmbc.gov



U.S. CENSUS
MONITORING
BOARD

CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS

4700 Silver Hill Road
FOB #3 ~ Suite 1230
Suitland, MD 20746

Phone: (301) 457-5080
Fax: (301) 457-5081

J. Kenneth Blackwell
Co-Chair

David Murray

A. Mark Neuman

Joe D. Whitley

Fred Asbell
Executive Director

18 January 2000

The Honorable Albert Gore
President
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

The Congressional Members of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board have, during the past year and a half, devoted hundreds of hours listening to, and talking with, a diverse group of true census stakeholders throughout the country. They include state and local governments and elected officials; community leaders; and the people who really live, work and serve in neighborhoods known to be hard-to-count and at risk for being missed in Census 2000.

While the unprecedented efforts of the Census Bureau will reach the majority of the households in America, there are still people who will not participate in the census. These disproportionately include members of poor, minority, urban, and immigrant communities, and children that are traditionally missed by the census. Many live in linguistically isolated communities and many are distrustful of the government. They live in America's hard-to-count neighborhoods—in the barrios, inner cities, remote rural areas, and reservations. These are the people who most need an accurate census for their fair share of political representation and more than \$180 billion in federal funds for health care, education, community development, transportation and many other programs that enhance their daily lives. It is these very people, however, who are most often missed or overlooked in the Census.

The following report provides a summary of the comments and recommendations made by a broad range of census stakeholders with whom the Board has met and who participated in an "Undercount Summit" organized by the Congressional Members of the Board and held at the National Press Club in Washington. The report also provides similar observations made by the participants at the Hispanic Federation Forum sponsored by the Presidential Members of the Board and held in New York City. The Congressional Members also participated in that Forum.

This report summarizes the concerns expressed by the participants in the Undercount Summit and the Hispanic Federation Forum that the Census Bureau's efforts are not sufficient to encourage people living in hard-to-count neighborhoods to participate in the census. The two groups identified barriers to counting hard-to-count neighborhoods and populations, and offered several recommendations they believe would encourage participation in Census 2000 in hard-to-count neighborhoods. A videotape with highlights of the Congressional Members' Undercount Summit is available by calling 301/457-5080.

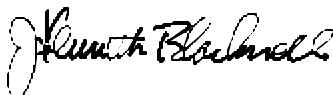
Four of the recommendations mentioned the most include:

- **Obtain a waiver or income exemption for persons receiving government assistance, including TANF and Food Stamps, for persons temporarily employed for the decennial census.** Hiring residents to be enumerators in many economically disadvantaged neighborhoods will depend on granting such a waiver and many persons and groups, including the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), share this concern.
- **Utilize local residents as “facilitators” to assist enumerators in hard-to-count neighborhoods.** Regional Directors and Local Census Office (LCO) Managers must have the operational freedom to hire trusted persons from the community (who may not be able to pass the Bureau's hiring test) to assist the enumerators by knocking on the doors and ensuring that residents will have the confidence to answer the census.
- **Ensure that bilingual, culturally sensitive persons—including non-citizens—are hired in linguistically isolated neighborhoods.** Non-citizens may have to be hired, either as enumerators or “facilitators,” to ensure that certain communities are counted in Census 2000. Therefore, the Bureau should do everything possible to ensure that LCO Managers can recruit and hire culturally sensitive persons to take the census. The Bureau must clarify all hiring guidelines.
- **Ensure that neighborhoods that are entirely Spanish speaking receive a notice written in Spanish letting the residents know that Spanish questionnaires are available and how to receive those questionnaires.** Residents in neighborhoods that are entirely Spanish speaking, such as Cameron Park colonias, will receive a letter written in English alerting them of the census and the availability of Spanish-language questionnaires. The Regional Census Centers and the Local Census Offices have the authority to deliver notices written in Spanish, or the appropriate dominant language, in these neighborhoods. Clearly, there are a number of neighborhoods throughout the country where initial contact in their own language will be essential to ensuring that every resident is counted.

While the Census Bureau will say that many of the recommendations made in this report are being implemented, the comments by the participants in the Undercount Summit and the Hispanic Federation Forum, as well as the field observations of the Congressional Members of the Board, suggest otherwise.

It is our hope that these solutions and suggestions made in this report by real people with real concerns will help the Census Bureau and result in a census that is fair and accurate to every demographic group and most importantly at every geographic level—including hard-to-count neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



J. Kenneth Blackwell
Co-Chairman



Dr. David W. Murray
Congressional Member



A. Mark Neuman
Congressional Member



Joe Whitley
Congressional Member

Contents

	Letter of Transmittal	i
I.	Background	1
II.	Summary: Barriers and Concerns	6
III.	Solutions	17
IV.	Appendix	22

Background

Listening to the Hard-to-Count Neighborhoods

Because of the importance of the census to every state, every city and every person living in America, the Congressional Members of the Census Monitoring Board have made an effort to talk with, not only the Census Bureau, but stakeholders as well. Over the past year and a half, since the formal organizational meeting of the entire Board on 8 June 1998, the Congressional Members, in the face of resistance on the part of the Census Bureau

to release operational details of Census 2000 planning, sought the testimony and perspective of census stakeholders. These stakeholders, including state and local government officials and community residents from hard-to-count neighborhoods, are the partners on whom the Census Bureau will rely to count the nation's streets and houses.

A PROFILE OF THE HARD-TO-COUNT: COLONIAS

The official definition of the colonia, "a residential subdivision lacking essential facilities such as water and wastewater services and paved roads," only begins to describe life in a colonia.

Colonias are found in the states along the US-Mexican border—Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. Most of the US colonias are in Texas—over 1200 colonias and approximately 300,000 residents. Almost 90 percent of the colonias in Texas are located in Hidalgo, El Paso, Starr, Cameron, Maverick, Webb and Zavala counties—251,032 persons who are 90 percent Hispanic and often recent immigrants.

Cameron Park, one of the oldest colonias and featured on national news programs, has become a "model" colonia. Due to the advocacy of the community, the roads in Cameron Park are paved, water is available and there are services available in the colonia. In fact, within the maze of streets there is a community health center, several businesses and a community center.

Yet, Cameron Park is not illustrative of the main. Most colonias are like Del Mar Heights, La Paloma, Blanca Juarez, Sunny Side, Huecho, Montana Vista, Rio Bravo and Basham 23. The residents of these colonias are geographically, culturally and linguistically isolated and struggle to obtain water for their daily needs and to even travel beyond the colonia.

These colonias are pockets of densely populated, linguistically isolated communities that presented difficulties during the 1990 census and will continue to challenge the Census Bureau in 2000.

Their experiences working singularly and in cooperation with the Census Bureau are an integral part of the record for Census 2000.

The Monitoring Board has created a series of opportunities—forums, “listening tours,” and hearings—for this express purpose.

Listening Tours

The nation’s hard-to-count neighborhoods are the foundation of the differential undercount—hundreds of thousands of people living in low-income, urban, rural and minority communities missed in the census.

Their neighborhoods, approximately 2,700 tracts out of the 62,000 tracts nationwide, should be the focus of the Census Bureau’s efforts to reduce the differential undercount.

The Congressional Members of the Board have ***made an effort to solicit the opinions, testimonies, and guidance of real persons living in hard-to-count neighborhoods.*** These “listening tours” have taken place in Robert Taylor Homes, the nation’s largest single housing project in Chicago; in the Delta and other rural areas of Mississippi; and in several Latino neighborhoods in Houston, including Magnolia Park. In addition, we directed staff research in other areas, including colonias in South Texas and a native village in Alaska.

The guiding principle of our investigation in the hard-to-count neighborhoods is the belief that as the leaders and residents of these neighborhoods, they know more about their community and, as a result, know better how to ensure people are counted in Census 2000. Therefore, the purpose of these Listening Tours was to gain an “on-the-ground” perspective regarding the barriers that will hamper the Census Bureau in 2000 in these hard-to-count communities and neighborhoods. And, more importantly, to discover ***what specific strategies should be used and what the Census Bureau must do to confront these barriers and to reduce the differential undercount.***

By improving the count at the neighborhood level where the undercount occurs, in every building and housing unit—at 4410 S. State Street in Chicago, at Baldwin Street and Edna Avenue in Isola, Mississippi, and at 3800 Lovejoy in Houston—the Census Bureau can reduce the differential undercount. However, in order to do so, the Census Bureau must amend current practices and allow for flexibility at the local level. ***Only through***

innovation and flexibility at the local level will the Bureau be able to count, in these hard-to-count neighborhoods, where real people are living and where the differential undercount occurs.

The Undercount Summit

Based on the recommendations and the discussions the Board had throughout the country in hard-to-count neighborhoods, the Congressional Members of the Census Monitoring Board created ***a forum for real people, members of hard-to-count communities, to share their knowledge and their solutions for Census 2000.*** This forum was called the Undercount Summit, and was held in Washington, DC, on October 29th 1999. The Summit brought people and voices, as yet unheard, together to share their expertise on ways to improve Census 2000.

The participants represented a wide-range of hard-to-count communities—inner city neighborhoods, reservations and remote rural areas. The representatives included residents, educators, labor unions, social service organizations, community activists, and government. The Congressional Members believe that the participants' statements and their expertise represent the best hope for ensuring a more accurate count for Census 2000.

Throughout the Undercount Summit, participants identified barriers and concerns. They also offered solutions for their communities that could be implemented right now to reduce the differential undercount of low-income, urban, rural and minority communities.

The Undercount Summit was organized into three panels

- *Isolated Communities: Language, Fear and Confidentiality in Hard-to-Count Neighborhoods*
- *How to Count in Hard-to-Count Neighborhoods*
- *Partnership: Expectations and Realities*

The panelists of *Isolated Communities* discussed the elements of reluctance and the reasons why people are unwilling to respond to the census. This panel brought together several residents of hard-to-count communities and several representatives of organizations with crucial roles in those communities, including a school principal. More importantly,

the panelists discussed linguistic isolation and apprehension in their own words. This panel created an inventory of barriers and concerns that the other panels discussed and then presented innovations and solutions to confront those barriers and concerns.

The panelists of *How to Count in Hard-to-Count Neighborhoods* illustrated the ability of local communities, if involved in the census, to provide resources that would help ensure an accurate census. The panelists represented a range of expertise—from a newspaper publisher to a Complete Count Committee chairperson, from a former director for the Salvation Army with expertise on the homeless in Cleveland, Ohio to the president of an organization that provides support to recent immigrants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The resources, including volunteer positions known as facilitators, were “home-grown” to fit the needs of a particular city, neighborhood or street.

Finally, the *Partnership* panel illustrated the way in which the Census Bureau could use the concern and willingness of state and local governments to create solutions for their hard-to-count neighborhoods.

Despite many of the panelists being unfamiliar with the other panelists and the other communities, one theme emerged: **the Census Bureau must do more in hard-to-count neighborhoods, current strategies are not enough.**

The Hispanic Federation Forum

In addition to the listening tours and to the Undercount Summit, the Congressional Members of the Board participated in a forum organized by the Presidential Members of the Census Monitoring Board and the Hispanic Federation on November 10th 1999 in New York City.

The Hispanic Federation, an organization of Latino health and human services agencies serving the metropolitan New York City area, created this forum “to discuss strategies to ensure that every New Yorker is counted in the 2000 census.” According to the president, missed children in the 1990 census were the inspiration for the Federation: “That is why the Hispanic Federation has taken a leadership role in promoting an accurate census.”

The participants of the Forum represented a wide range of services and agencies—including City Council members, the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York City, ALIANZA, and civil rights organizations. The comments and concerns of these participants, while focused on primarily Latino and Asian immigrant neighborhoods in the dense urban environment of New York City, were consistent with those presented at the Undercount Summit. These concerns reflected the need for the Census Bureau to do more in hard-to-count neighborhoods.

Summary

The Concerns of the Hard-to-Count Communities

This document, using the words of the participants of the Undercount Summit and the Hispanic Federation, **briefly summarizes** the barriers, concerns and solutions the participants have shared with the Census Monitoring Board.

This summary is organized into three discussions: *Barriers*, *Concerns*, and *Solutions*. “Barriers” provides a sense of what keeps people from answering a census questionnaire and what those reasons may be. “Concerns” illustrates the actual link between the barrier and the census forms that will not be completed in hard-to-count neighborhoods and “Solutions” presents some of the innovative and common sense methods states, cities and organizations will use to encourage participation in Census 2000.

Barriers

The first panel of the Undercount Summit, *Isolated Communities: Language, Fear and Confidentiality*, was a discussion of the basic elements of reluctance regarding the census: fear and isolation. **People living in neighborhoods with little or no positive contact with government are highly suspicious of sharing “private” information with anyone from the government and actually fear what might become of their information and themselves if they answer the census questionnaire.** Participants at the Summit and the Hispanic Federation Forum indicated that people just do not trust that their information will not be shared with another government agency—such as Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and other agencies. Isolation, including linguistic isolation, alienates residents from the message of the census’ importance.

As the Summit and Forum participants consistently identified fear, mistrust and isolation as the leading barriers in hard-to-count neighborhoods, the lack of a strategy meeting these barriers was also pointed out. **These barriers will directly affect the success of the Census 2000** questionnaire response and non-response follow-up efforts.

Fear and Mistrust

Often in hard-to-count communities, any efforts by the government are viewed with suspicion and directly affect the level of cooperation the Census Bureau may receive in Census 2000.

Undercount Summit

- “In Indian country there’s a vast number of reasons, particularly the primary reason is that *the government has made many promises to my people and broken every one of them*. That’s reason enough for any human being to distrust any federal agent.”
Chairman Apesanahkwat, Tribal Leader, Menominee Reservation, WI
- “Some of our basic fears are the unknowns of where the information is going to go...who all will receive various aspects of it...”
Shahshak Levi-Nawls, Resident and Community Activist, Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago, IL
- “... if INS is walking behind, or in front of, any of your census takers, those immigrants who may be here legally or illegally are gone. ... And I have had past experiences with INS walking in the door immediately after an enumerator and that’s the end of counting anything.”
The Honorable Carol Roberts, Commissioner, Palm Beach County, FL

Hispanic Federation Forum

- “I cannot stress enough to the Census Monitoring Board today how important it is to diffuse this fear by getting across a clear message of confidentiality. This obviously won’t solve all of our undercount problems in New York, but it will make a difference.”
Herbert Berman, Council Member, New York, NY
- “There is a big distrust of big government, and that being rightly so with the immigrant community.”

“Again, *just the fear is enormous when we talk about people knocking on doors or receiving forms which they have to submit...* I think the important

message is, and what I would like to bring here, is that it is important to reach out to our organizations, who hold the trust in the community.”

Michael Amezquita, Executive Director, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigration Rights, New York, NY

- “...all the outreach doesn’t overcome those other barriers. I think that this is particularly true for the immigrant population. *You can stand on your head and tell people that it is safe, and frankly, you [Census Bureau] can’t tell people that it is safe, which is the whole reason for inaccurate counting, so that we can finally break away from a lot of the problems and counteract that particular issue.*”

Margie McHugh, Executive Director, New York Immigrant Coalition

Isolation

Isolation, whether geographic, cultural, or linguistic, reduces the ability and willingness of hard-to-count communities to participate in Census 2000.

Undercount Summit

- “Colonias residents face geographic, social and economic isolation aggravated by illiteracy and a *limited understanding of the workings of the larger community.*”
Larry Rincones, Regional Director, Texas A & M Colonias Program
- “Street and building lights are turned off sometimes by gang members. When the elevators do not work, you could conceivably walk up 16 flights of dark dirty stairs...Given these conditions, *who wouldn’t experience fear, isolation and despair. Given its reputation, census takers may even experience doubt about entering these building to count the number of family members...*”
Gwendolyn Long, Principal, Farren Fine Arts Elementary School, Chicago, IL

Hispanic Federation Forum

- “*The largest influence and the biggest problem affecting this community happens to be limited English proficiency.*”
The Honorable Roberto Ramirez, Assembly Member, New York, NY

Concerns

Most of the concerns expressed during the Undercount Summit and the Hispanic Federation Forum were directly related to the barriers of fear and isolation. These concerns, as they were defined and discussed throughout all of the panels, illustrate the need for the Census Bureau to re-evaluate their current strategies and to acknowledge the barriers of hard-to-count communities.

Many of these concerns took the form of recommendations that the Census Bureau should consider.

Enumerators

The enumerators are the Census Bureau's infantry units. An enumerator is the individual responsible for knocking on the door of a house and completing the census questionnaire for a household that did not return the census questionnaire.

Cultural sensitivity—an enumerator that looks and sounds like the people on the other side of the door—is one of the most basic requirements in hard-to-count communities. Without cultural sensitivity, the enumerators are unlikely to be able to complete their task.

Undercount Summit

- *“No one is going to convince Indians that they should be counted except Indians.”*

“I have an eighth grade education myself personally. My people have, on average, less than the eighth grade. But we have always known how many Indians were on that reservation... If you want to know how many Indians are there, we can tell you. You don't need no degree to do that.”

Chairman Apesanahkwat

- *“I believe that there is not enough emphasis being placed on are we matching up the right enumerator for the areas that we need to, especially focusing on the hard-to-count.... So you can't just overlook the fact that who you're going to have knock on the door has to be somebody that looks*

like the person that's living there. And speak the language. If you don't even have that as a capability, it's not going to work."

Ana Sol Gutierrez, President, Casa de Maryland, Inc., Silver Spring, MD

- "They may not be the people that you socialize with every day but those folks need to be the enumerators, *the folks that know these people on the street by their first names* and have already developed a sense of trust."
Bill Bowen, former Director, Salvation Army, Cleveland, OH
- "We are not going to entrust our private lives to strangers. Therefore, *strangers will not be allowed to come into Robert Taylor Homes.*"
Tyrone Galtney, Resident and Community Activist, Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago, IL
- "Just for a point of reference, the FBI has a two-year removal of their qualifications for those who are fluent in Spanish. *If the FBI can do it, this panel can give some consideration.*"
Bud McTaggart, Executive Assistant, AFL-CIO Cleveland, OH

Hispanic Federation Forum

- "This leads to another major issue that we wanted to address, which is the issue of hiring bilingual personnel. The Census Bureau has come out with a citizenship neutral policy. Guess what? If you are not on the 51 Allied nation list, you are going to have a problem getting hired.... It excludes India, China, Taiwan and a lot of the bilingual personnel. *That is something that we really need to get the Census Bureau to really [be] aggressively hiring bilingual people in our community.*"
Margaret Chin, Executive Director, Asian Americans for Equality, New York, NY
- "My big worry is that we don't really have a plan.... So, it seems to me now that we are still in the very broad brush strokes where we are talking about how diverse the population is, and about where the target neighborhoods are, but *we are still not really talking about down at the deepest community levels about how we are actually going to get people in those areas.*"
Margie McHugh

INS and Enforcement Actions

Certain enforcement actions, considered punitive, have a chilling effect on census cooperation because they disrupt and create a wave of fear throughout the community.

Undercount Summit

- “Because of the negative impact that INS enforcement activities will have on the trust of immigrant communities during the Census 2000 and to ensure a fair and open participation in the census, *we strongly urge you to recommend the suspension of INS enforcement activities for the year 2000* to ensure that immigrant communities feel safe talking to the government representative during the entire census process.”
Benito Juarez, Coordinator, Houston Immigration and Refugee Coalition, Houston, TX
- “*We have to remove all the ideas or concepts of punitive action* being taken no matter whether it’s the INS or a landlord or a housing authority or the police or anyone.”
Bill Bowen

Hispanic Federation Forum

- “Also the issue of addressing their concerns about the INS. I was recently among the Regional Council for Immigrant Head Start. That was a big concern of that population, that *they do not trust the INS and what is going to happen with the information that they get from the parents*. They would be willing to be third parties if they knew we addressed those concerns, that they would not be in some way helping the INS.”
Elba Montalvo, Executive Director, Hispanic Committee on Children and Families

Adequate Materials for Hard-to-Count Areas, Especially in Spanish

Inadequate or unavailable materials make cooperation and partnership with the Census Bureau difficult. Specifically, for hard-to-count neighborhoods, materials for schools and language specific materials are important in Census 2000.

Undercount Summit

- *“Make sure the regional centers distribute the literature in a timely fashion to all schools including those of us who have known an undercount in previous years.”*
Gwendolyn Long
- *“A lack of census fact sheets and promotional materials needed by partnership specialists for outreach education efforts. A lack of census fact sheets in other languages, especially Spanish, that are needed in the community.”*
Anna Núñez, Census 2000 Coordinator, City of Houston, TX

Hispanic Federation Forum

- *“In the 1990 census, over 64 percent of the Asian population stated that they do not speak English proficiently, so that is almost two thirds of the population. The Asian population is growing, and as the new population is adding, for example in the different communities, they definitely need information in their language.”*

“One of the things that we have also been pushing on is that the government is spending all this money on this national advertising campaign. When we first saw the trailer, we questioned how come the language program was not even mentioned in this huge advertising campaign that is going to reach all the sectors. They are going to do it in all languages, and I saw this piece in Chinese, but there was no mention about there is going to be Chinese assistance available by the questionnaires or in the information...”

"I mentioned before you should be getting bilingual information. Voter guides that will be coming to all the households and are in Spanish and in English. There is a paragraph, if you want Chinese, you can call in for it. Also like the information when you register to vote, the Board of Elections now sends out stuff in three languages."

Margaret Chin

The Lack of Spanish Language Questionnaire

Not sending a Spanish-language questionnaire to the neighborhoods that are exclusively Spanish speaking was consistently cited as a major impediment for these communities.

Undercount Summit

- "We believe that instead of sending this form in English to Spanish speakers, *they should send a form in Spanish*. So in that way people will be able to understand better what it is about and feel more confident in filling out and participating in the census"

Benito Juarez

- "A lack of census forms in Spanish. This is especially critical. Many people are unaware of the fact that in order to receive a census questionnaire in Spanish, they must first respond to a *letter [in English]* that will be mailed to them, to their home in March. *If they do not respond to this form, they will not receive a census questionnaire in Spanish.*"

"I would, again, respectfully request of whoever can affect change if the recognition was done in 1992 as to the specific challenge affecting the Latino community that, again, the inclusion of additional forms in Spanish is very critical for an accurate count."

Anna Núñez

Hispanic Federation Forum

- "But the problem is how are you going to get a hold of that questionnaire? When we first pushed for it with the advisory committee, we thought well technically, they took the form and mailed it to the Asians here in New York City. We get the voter's guide in English and Spanish, and if you want a

Chinese one, there is a phone number you can call? Guess what? Technically, it could be done. After all the discussion and everything, it came down to the pre-Census letter.... *Because in order to do it [obtain a Spanish questionnaire], they have got turn the English letter over to the back and find their languages and make a check mark and send it back.*"

"The request form, it is sent out in English. One of the things that we presented and that I suggested, minimally is to have something on the envelope that could alert people that there is something in there that is in their own language."

Margaret Chin

- "The fact is you can't get it right, because somebody is going to think it is wrong. But the paralysis is not to do anything. *Give it a try and bear some of the heat for doing it. We deal with this all time when we send out things bilingually.* Somebody gets offended, but you can't get it 100 percent right. You just have to do as much as you can. Most people understand that we live in a multicultural town, a multicultural country, and they are not offended. So just as much saturation as possible. More in this is better. We come into this problem all the time, where we learn that one of our parishes now has added a service in another language, and we didn't send them that because on our previous list, it wasn't there. Each weekend, mass is celebrated in 50 different languages in our parishes. It is never four or five. It is 50 different languages. You can't get it 100 percent right, but more is better in this situation."

Father Kevin Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer, The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York City

Remove Barriers to Hiring

Hiring tests, application forms, and English proficiency exams may have the effect of screening out the very members of the American family who should be hired to count their communities in Census 2000.

Undercount Summit

- *“If you have to take the enumerators test or application and throw it out the window, that’s what you’re going to have to do. And you’re going to have to do that with a lot of these populations. Perhaps the enumerator that you need the most is the one who can’t read the application for the enumerator test.”*
Bill Bowen
- *“Not only do you have to pass that test in Spanish, you have to be able to pass an English proficiency test because the training is done in English, not in Spanish even though these persons would be required to work in Spanish dominant areas.”*

A Profile of the Hard-to-Count: Robert Taylor Homes

At the end of the “State Street Corridor” in Chicago—four miles of densely populated low-income, majority African-American, public housing, stands Robert Taylor Homes. Built between 1959 and 1961, Robert Taylor Homes is the nation’s largest housing project. At its peak occupancy in 1964, there were 26,946 authorized residents living in the 28 sixteen story buildings and 4300 housing units.

According to the Chicago Housing Authority, of the 7689 current residents of Robert Taylor Homes 99.9 percent are African-American and 84 percent earn less than \$10,000 a year.

Robert Taylor Homes presents several challenges for Census 2000. The Census Bureau must employ enough enumerators who are willing to physically do the work and who understand the culture of the residents living in Robert Taylor Homes. In the extreme case, an enumerator must be willing to enter a gang-controlled apartment building and climb sixteen darkened flights of stairs to knock on a door to talk with a person, who is suspicious of the government and is living with unauthorized residents, and get them to answer the census questionnaire. Additionally, the Census Bureau must find reliable partners who can explain confidentiality and the purpose of the census to the residents of Robert Taylor.

Robert Taylor Homes was severely undercounted in the 1990 census. In 1990, the census count in the census tracts comprising Robert Taylor Homes indicated 8787 persons. The adjusted census would have only added 673 persons to that count. Yet, the Chicago Housing Authority’s *Statistical Profile* for 1991 estimated a population of 12,320 in Robert Taylor Homes—3500 more persons than the census count. The census and the adjustment both reflect a substantial undercount in the Robert Taylor Homes community.

Anna Núñez

- “So I believe that you need to alter the test not only for minorities, not only for perhaps those who have a problem with the reading and the writing, *but I think you need to alter the test and not make it a barrier, but make it rather something that allows people to participate.*”
The Honorable Carol Roberts

Welfare Waiver

Granting a “waiver,” an “exclusion” or an “exemption” for earnings derived from temporary census employment is important for hard-to-count neighborhoods.

Undercount Summit

- “We need to say to the government to make sure that one of our enumerators are our welfare recipients from the housing project that *there is a waiver that is given so that they are not penalized for this short-term job that they’re doing for the benefit of the country.*”
Gwendolyn Long
- “It’s paramount to getting facilitators and enumerators, and that is in order to facilitate neighborhood hiring, *income derived from being census takers should not be counted towards the ceilings for Food Stamps, public housing, and other social services.* If it does, you eliminate a great source of accomplishing this.”
Bud McTaggart

Solutions

Opportunities to Reduce the Differential Undercount

Addressing the difficulties in hard-to-count neighborhoods includes both “home-grown” strategies and cooperation with the Bureau. These strategies, discussed during the *How to Count in Hard-to-Count Neighborhoods* and *Partnership* panels at the Undercount Summit and throughout the Hispanic Federation Forum, focus on outreach and ensuring that enumerators have access to the help they need.

These solutions reflect local challenges and, more importantly, the local resources that can be made available to the Census Bureau. They range from using the standard Bureau partnership opportunities to really doing something unique such as creating census facilitators to help the enumerators. Some of these solutions suggest that there are a lot of resources that are being neglected and some areas that could be used more. For instance, schools can do more than just presenting “Census in the Schools” curriculum. They are important members of the community that often have a daily relationship with parents in hard-to-count neighborhoods, not only the children. Therefore, one solution is to expand the schools partnerships.

There are a lot of solutions. The participants in the Summit and the Forum only presented a few. There are solutions in every state, city, neighborhood and community that will work. Moreover, these are solutions that can be implemented right now to reduce the differential undercount.

Undercount Summit

- “*We at the schools*, both public and private, from kindergarten to graduate school can serve as a point to reach hard-to-reach areas and populations. This is especially true serving, as we well know, in every community of Hispanic, immigrant and African American and other minority populations. Certainly we can all agree around this table that it serves the nation’s best interest to recruit schools in this endeavor. I

gather from my discussions around the table with many of you that has yet to take place.”

Jaime de la Isla, Assistant Superintendent, Houston Independent School District, Houston, TX

- “What we need to do is *partnership with the human service community action agencies where people are familiar with dealing with people*. They have caseworkers there. They have people that on a day-to-day basis they have contact with.”

The Honorable Jimmie Smith, Supervisor, Lauderdale County, MS

- “The city will be using its libraries, multi-service centers and health clinics as questionnaire assistance centers. We will be using our personnel in these facilities to help and assist people with the questionnaires. The city will house the city census task force in a suite upstairs in City Hall. We’ll have our own office. We’ll have our own hotline.”

Johnny Soto, Chief of Staff for John Castillo (District I), Houston City Council, Houston, TX

- “Special populations require special efforts by the Census Bureau and New York is assisting by identifying the location of all facilities licensed by state agencies as community-based facilities, group quarters, or other institutional facilities.”

“To improve communication, New York is developing partnerships with county, regional and local governments, businesses, the media and many not-for-profits. Promotional materials, artwork and text is being made available electronically to spread the message to every part of the state by various methods. We have our own Census 2000 New York web site.”

“New York City Census 2000 is working with business improvement districts for the first time across the city publicize the census message. In addition, the City’s plan encourages residential buildings, both large and small, throughout the city to assign building captains. The captains will evaluate census awareness by having volunteers knock on each door on April 1st, 2000 to stimulate the completion of questionnaires from all residents...”

Leslie Maeby, Director, New York State Complete Count Committee, Albany, NY

- “*Hold census forums at school sites* which we are going to do at Farren. Hold mock census enumerations. Employ parents who work at the school who live in the housing development as the census takers. Set up sites in the school where residents may give the census information versus having strangers come to the apartments.”

Gwendolyn Long

- “*Client databases.* Every social service agency has one. Yes, there’s confidentiality. *But they can take you to the house or they can take you to the client* or they can encourage the client either by telephone or by mail to come in to a satellite location to fill out the form.”

Bill Bowen

- “[This program] would also establish a *volunteer position known as a facilitator* and this person will be a trusted and respected individual of good moral character and will hold the ability to provide a comfort zone between the enumerator and the resident....He or she would understand that his time is voluntary and that he would be *called on only when enumerators are lost or having difficulty penetrating a home.*”

Lethreanna Gatewood, Chair, Little Rock Missionary Baptist Complete Count Committee, Gulfport, MS

- We think our *existing promotoras program could encourage colonia residents to believe it is safe for them to participate in Census 2000.* Promotoras could encourage them to see that it is important for them to participate. They could accompany enumerators on home visits where it appears there is a reluctance to talk with people unknown to the residents. We can assist Census 2000 in identifying dependable colonia residents who could serve as enumerators in those communities. We believe our existing staff could also help reduce the undercount by mobilizing other outreach programs who we know well to assist enumerators in isolated communities where we do not have a presence ourselves.”

“Finally we believe we could also *hire colonia residents* and create team to work with Census 2000 in colonias where no outreach programs now exist.”

Larry Rincones, Regional Director, Texas A&M Promotoras Program, Weslaco, TX

- “Somehow I think there has to be a requirement, *a minimum standard requirement of clear evidence of plans being in place that focuses on the hard-to-enumerate as a minimal focus and have the expectation of all local entities.*”
Ana Sol Gutierrez

Hispanic Federation Forum

- “Why not punctuate our ‘Constituent Cause’ in our newsletters with a reminder of the importance of the census, and a promise of confidentiality is implicit. As, needed, seniors with census questions could be referred to appropriate federal help lines or helped by our own constituent services.”

“We must also get the Census message into our classrooms. I know that Census 2000 in partnership with Scholastic heads, has some wonderful free curriculum material available to kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers, tailored for specific grades. I just want to remind everybody that 20 years ago, my children pestered me because of what they learned in school, and caused me to stop smoking. If they could do that, they can get their parents to respond to the Census application. We must tell teachers now that this wonderful resource is available to them and will be available.”

The Honorable Herbert Berman

- “One of things we that we are trying to do in our organization is that we are committed to use our own office as a Census question assistance center so that our client, who knows us, will be able to come in and feel comfortable about filling out the form and getting help.”
Margaret Chin, Asian Americans for Equality

- “One, one of the unique things that we bring as Catholic Charities of the Arch Diocese of New York and in general as the religious community is that we have what is referred to secularly as branch offices or as others call them, parishes located in every one of the communities of New York City.... You have a ready made network of what can would conceivably be community assistance centers.... They are already staffed, for the most part. Not perfect, by people who speak the languages of those communities because they have to do it on a day to day basis.”

“The other thing which I will stress over and over again is the question of confidentiality. Hard to reach populations just don’t believe you. It is that simple.... That is why there is the need for those trusted third parties to become involved in that.”

Father Kevin Sullivan

- “In using third parties like that, I think that is a very useful way of getting people to speak up.”

Elba Montalvo

Appendix

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



815 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 637-5000
<http://www.aflcio.org>

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

JOHN J. SWEENEY
PRESIDENT

Vicent R. Sombrotto
Robert A. George
Moe Biler
Arthur A. Cole
George F. Becker
Patrizia Fremi
Surs Huru
Leon Lynch
Robert E. Wages
Edward L. Fine
R. Thomas Buhnbarger
Stuart Appelbaum
Michael J. Sullivan

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Gerald W. McEntee
Gene Usselman
Frank Harley
Frank Hart
Stephen P. Yokich
Michael Goodwin
Carolyn Haynes
Douglas J. McCann
Jake West
Martin J. Maddidori
Boyd D. Young
John W. Williams
James P. Hoffa

LINDA CHAVEZ-THOMPSON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

John T. Joyce
Jay Mazer
James J. Norton
Gloria T. Johnson
Clydia Brown
Jon L. Greene
James La Sala
Arturo S. Rodriguez
Alfred K. Whitehead
John M. Bowco
Dennis Rivera
Elizabeth Burn
Capt. Duane Worth

Morton Bohr
John J. Barry
Michael Sacco
Douglas H. Dority
M.A. "Mac" Fleming
Sonny Hill
William Lucy
Robert A. Scardikelli
Andrew L. Stern
Sandra Feldman
Bobby L. Hartage Sr.
Michael E. Monroe

December 13, 1999

Mr. Ken Blackwell, Chairman
Census Monitoring Board
Congressional Members
4700 Silver Hill Road
P. O. Box 610
Suitland, Maryland 20752

Dear Chairman Blackwell:

Thanks to you, your Monitoring Board members and staff for sponsoring the Under County Summit held October 29, 1999, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Your inclusion of labor, with Bud McTaggart of the Cleveland AFL-CIO, provided an opportunity to present testimony on this serious issue. We hope this is only the beginning of a partnership with the Bureau on the 2000 census.

One critical issue that Bud addressed in his testimony was obtaining a waiver from the Departments of Agriculture and HUD so that income derived from working as a census taker or other support staff will be waived.

I am sure you are aware that the AFL-CIO and several of our international unions have signed a partnership agreement with the Bureau of Census. Our Civil Rights Department is keenly aware of your task and our efforts in assuring an accurate count. We share your concerns as it relates to language, fear and confidentiality of minorities, immigrants and native Americans.

Susana Gomez, Assistant Director of the AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Department is available to assist you in those areas. She can be reached at 202-637-5271.


Please let me know if you would like our assistance in the waiver area by contacting me at 202-637-5270.

Mr. Blackwell
December 13, 1999
Page 2 of 2

In closing I would like to bring your attention to a serious issue.

"In order to facilitate neighborhood hiring, income derived from being a census taker should not be counted toward ceiling for food stamps, public housing and other social services. Does the Bureau need a new statute to make this determination?"

Sincerely,


Richard Womack
Director
Department of Civil Rights

RW/sb
opeiu #2, afl-cio