

Latinas Connected for Change! Report Central & Western Washington Conferences

Introduction

The voices of women who are low-income and/or immigrant, women living in crisis and those on the margins, are not typically included in organizing for change in a way that meets their needs. The Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center (IPJC) facilitates Justice for Women, a bilingual community empowerment program for women living in poverty. Women's Justice Circles are formed to enable women to change conditions that keep them poor, unstable and oppressed.

Through these Circles women develop grassroots leadership and organizing skills in order to take action to create systemic change. Currently 75% of the Justice Circles take place among urban Latina immigrants and rural migrant workers.



Seattle Conference

At IPJC we believe in women's tireless resilience and genuine desire to improve their lives. We believe in women's ability to claim their power, from the strengths gained in daily survival, and from the sharing of innumerable lessons of resistance. We are convinced that when women reflect on their sources of power and recognize the great influence of their mothers, grandmothers and other powerful women in their lives, they begin to see themselves as effective agents of change.



"I learned to recognize that as women we sometimes forget about how important we are to the community."

-Liliana, Tukwila



Sunnyside Conference

Ten years of Justice Circle organizing in forty-five cities throughout Washington led IPJC to organize, **Latinas Connected for Change**, two conferences in Spanish: one for rural Latina migrant workers in Central Washington and the other for urban Latina immigrants in Western Washington. Conference goals were to:

- * Celebrate the strengths of Latina women
- * Build skills for leadership development and civic participation
- * Develop an expanded Latina network
- * Identify and organize ways to address the challenges that the Latino community confronts
- * Foster city-wide efforts and statewide collaborative opportunities that will better serve the Latino community

The conferences created a safe space for immigrant Latinas to network and feel confident enough to begin to recognize that silence does not protect them and that their voices can be validated and respected.



Latinas Connected for Change!

Central Washington: Sunnyside—March 5, 2011

160 Latinas from eight counties. Co-sponsored by Nuestra Casa

Western Washington: Seattle—November 5, 2011

300 Latinas from nine counties – sponsored by IPJC, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Center, and The Children's Museum.



Both conferences celebrated Latina strengths and accomplishments, reinforced community support systems, and fortified Latina organizing capacity. Latinas from all socioeconomic groups, nationalities, and walks of life inspired one another by exchanging insights of inner strength, motivation and leadership development. Through sharing and connecting their life experiences and accomplishments, participants realized their leadership potential and that they can come together and act for social justice.

The following charts provide a picture of the issues, community assets and qualities for leadership development discussed by conference participants.

U.S. Latinos

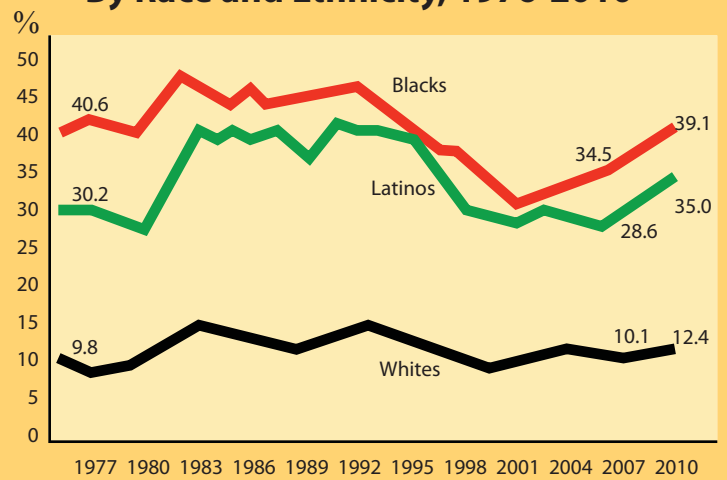
Top Issues Among Latino Registered Voters: Jobs, Education and Health

(% who say issue is "extremely important")



Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011 National Survey of Latinos

Poverty Rate of Children: By Race and Ethnicity, 1976-2010



Source: Pew Hispanic Center, U.S. Census Bureau



Seattle Conference



Sunnyside Conference

"It was a great success... I have discovered I have a mission in life and I will do everything possible to use my skills for the benefit of my community." —Rosario, Mabton

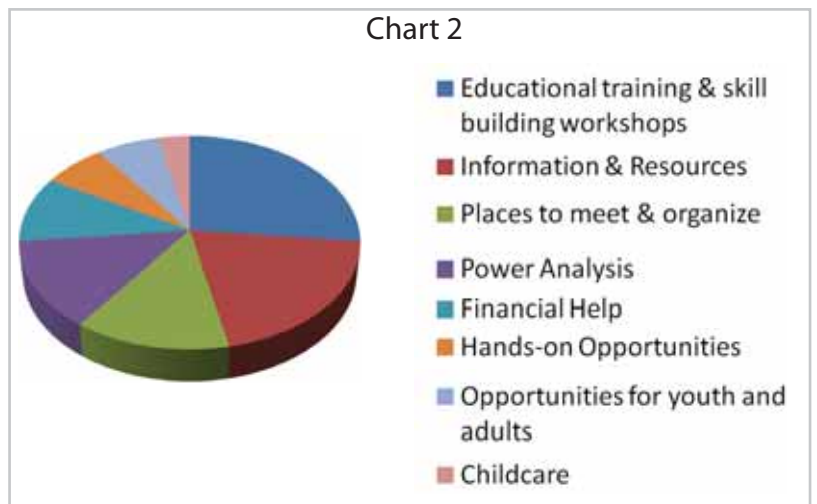
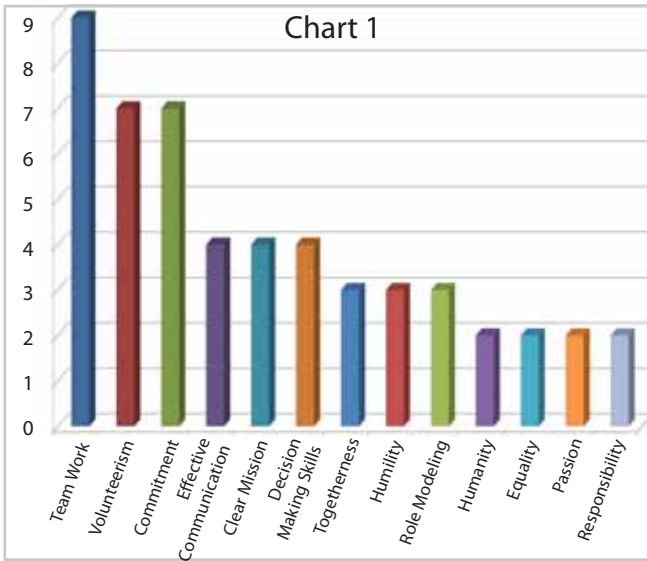
Major Social Issues in the Latino Community



Central Washington

A two-fold focus emerged at the Central Washington Conference:

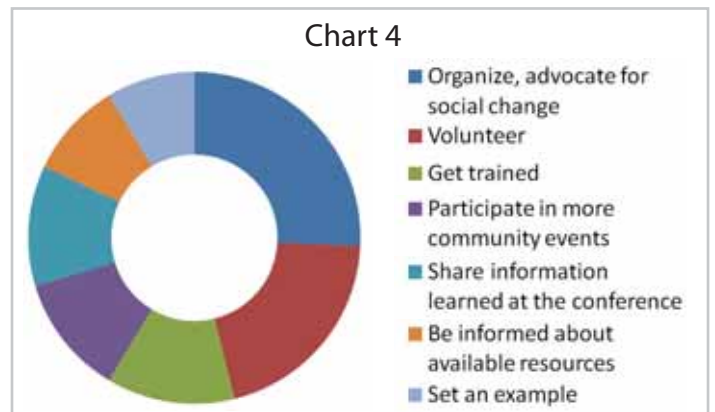
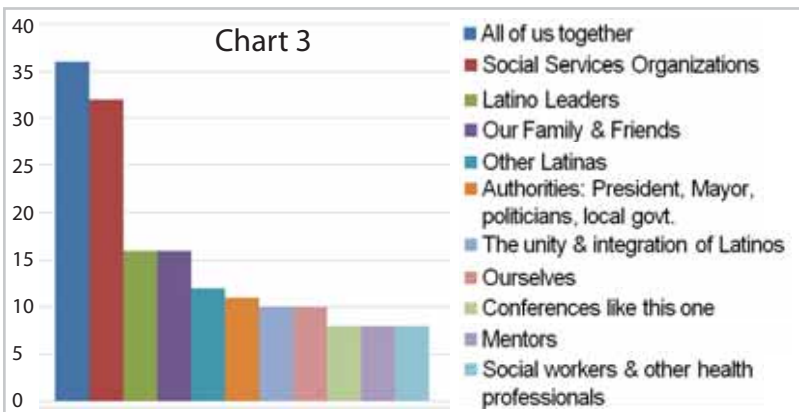
- ✳ Identification and discussion of the qualities necessary for the development of shared leadership for community organizing (chart #1)
- ✳ Elements for Effective Shared Leadership (chart#2)



Western Washington

The three hundred Latinas gathered expressed the importance of and need for collaborative partnerships—organizations, community groups, churches, educational institutions, the Latino network—for effective social change. The conference process and discussion emphasized:

- ✳ Community assets for leadership development (chart #3)
- ✳ Processes and systems that would support and strengthen Latina community organizing (chart #4)



Recommendations

Community Support and Resources

- * Expansion of services and safety nets for the Latino community to address domestic violence issues. Provision of Spanish language and culturally appropriate resources.
- * Navigational support for access to healthcare.

Education

- * Interactive and skill building workshops on a range of topics, including: immigrant rights and internalized oppression.
- * Leadership training, mentoring and opportunities.
- * Financial literacy education.

For some Latinas it is necessary to first acknowledge women's gifts, recognize personal and community power, name and face what oppresses them, including internalized oppression, in order to engage in community organizing work.

Public Policy and Advocacy

- * Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Provide pathways to citizenship for immigrants and refugees. Permanent Residency and Naturalization Services.
- * Strengthen economic security enhancing access to healthcare, education and human resources that are necessary for developing healthy communities.
- * DREAM Act: support and access to education for women who are low-income.
- * Affordable housing: access and support mechanisms and funding.

Social Change

- * Creation and coordination of a network of Latino leaders.
- * Grassroots community organizing and expansion of the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center's Women's Justice Circles.
- * Public awareness campaigns on issues facing Latina women.

Seattle & Sunnyside Conference Advisors

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Latinos in Washington

Hispanic Population
687,000

Hispanics As Percent Of State Population
10%

Median Age Of Hispanics
23

Median Income, Hispanics 16+
\$20,000

Poverty Rate, Hispanics 17 & Younger
31%

Poverty Rates, Hispanics 18-34
18%

Hispanics Without Health Insurance
30%

Hispanic Homeownership
45%

Source: Pew Research Center, 2009

Hispanic Child Population

299,000 – WA Ranks 12 in U.S.

Voters

Hispanics are 5% of eligible voters

Source: Pew Hispanic Center

WA State Hispanics Population Trends

- * Hispanic population is the fastest growing race/ethnic group
- * Forecast is for 150% growth between 2010-2030

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2006 predictions

Current Hispanic population in Washington 11.2%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census



Seattle Mayor McGinn greeting conference participants