



The NiLP Report

on Latino Politics & Policy

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Toward a Progressive Latino Agenda for New York City

Progressive Latino Activists Launch New Citywide Agenda-Building Campaign

By the Campaign for Fair Latino Representation (October 3, 2015)

Latino activists from throughout the city gathered all day Friday, October 2, 2015 to begin the process of developing a progressive Latino policy agenda for New York City. Sponsored by the [Campaign for Fair Latino Representation](#), this citywide forum focused on discussions on approaches and issues in the building a progressive policy agenda responsive to the needs of the city's 2.5 million Latinos, who make up close to a third of the city's population, as well as ways on how best to mobilize the community to promote such an agenda with the Mayor and City Counsel.



Panelist Ramon Jimenez on the need for a unified progressive Latino agenda, as Javier Valdez of Make the Road NY looks on

Javier A. Nieves, Chair of the Campaign's Coordinating Committee, opened the forum by outlining the event's objectives and thanking all those individual and organizations that made it possible. He described the objectives of the forum as consisting of:

1. Launching a process for building a Progressive Latino Policy Agenda;
2. Identifying an approach and issues that such an agenda should include;
3. Discussing the most effective ways to mobilize to promote this agenda; and
4. Identifying individuals and organizations that can sponsor local follow-up forums in Latino neighborhoods.

Nieves described the 2015-16 planning process for the development of this agenda as follows:

1. This citywide forum will help the Campaign sets general framework for such an agenda;
2. They will develop concept paper resulting from today's discussions by mid-October;
3. Local community forums will be organized in late October through December throughout the city for further input identifying key issues and organizing

- strategies;
4. The Campaign will host a Citywide Latino Policy Summit in January to finalize the agenda;
 5. They will be releasing this agenda in time for the Mayor's second State of the City Address in February 2016; and
 6. They will be promoting the agenda with Mayor and City Council from that point on.
 - 7.



NYC Latino Policy Summit Planning Process



The first Panel, "Toward a Progressive Latino Policy Agenda for New York City," was moderated by **Dr. José R. Sánchez**, Professor of Political Science at Long Island University-Brooklyn Campus. The first panelist, **Juan Cartagena**, President and General Counsel of [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#), described the work of his organization in protecting the civil rights of Latinos. He was followed by attorney **Jamie Estades**, President of the [Latino Leadership Institute](#), who discussed the lack of power sharing Latinos have with white liberals and progressives, explaining that Mayor de Blasio's approach to policy is class-based but ignores that "class has color." **Dr. Arlene Davila**, Professor of Anthropology at [New York University](#), made the argument for involving youth and artists in the development of a progressive Latino movement for change. Attorney **Ramon Jimenez**, the Main Organizer of the [Bronx Community Congress](#), pointed to the uniqueness of this gathering of Latino progressives and the need for all present to be actively engaged in the follow-up organizing that is necessary. The final panelist, **Javier Valdez**, Co-Director of [Make the Road NY](#), reviewed the various issues and challenges his organization faces in a wide variety of policy areas, such as housing and education, and spoke to the need to connect any advocacy to their grassroots membership and in Spanish as well as English.



Following this first panel discussion, led by **Dr. Luis O. Reyes**, the Campaign's Secretary-Treasurer, the forum divided into four breakout groups for those interested in organizing local forums in Latino neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn-Staten Island, Manhattan and Queens. The result of these sessions was the identification of issues and individuals interested in organizing these local forums to solicit community input into the development of the citywide progressive Latino policy agenda. The Campaign plans on sponsoring these local sessions in the South Bronx, Washington Heights, El Barrio-East Harlem, Loisaida-Lower East Side, Jackson Heights, Los Sures-Williamsburg, Sunset Park, East New York-Bushwick, northern Staten Island and other Latino neighborhoods..

The second panel in the afternoon, moderated by **Dr. Andres Torres**, Distinguished Lecturer at CUNY's Lehman College, focused on "Mobilizing the Latino Commodity for Social Change." This discussion was opened by Pastor **Samuel Cruz** of [Trinity Lutheran Church](#), who spoke about the need to involve faith-based communities in Latino advocacy efforts, especially as an alternative to traditional electoral politics, pointing out that voting may not always be the best approach. **Dennis Flores** of [El Grito de Sunset Park](#) and member of the Campaign's Coordinating Committee discussed this group's approach of the use of video to expose and organize against police brutality in Latino communities. **Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas**, Executive Director of the [National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health](#), described her work in promoting the rights of Latinas women and different ways her organization mobilizes, pointing out the importance of direct door-to-door organizing. **Wanda Salaman**, Director of [Mothers on the Move \(MOM\)](#), spoke about her group's grassroots organizing around housing and other issues in the South Bronx, explaining that she is getting tired of participating in meetings that only generate more meetings and not action. Finally **Byron Silva**, Assistant Business Manager of the [Labor International Union of North America, Local 78](#), discussed the organizing campaigns of and approaches to protecting the rights of Latino and other asbestos workers.



Following each panel and during the breakout sessions, the participants raised questions and comments on key issues facing the Latino community that should be part of a progressive Latino policy agenda. Javier Nieves and José R. Sánchez closed the forum outlining next steps and thanking all those who made the event possible. The forum proceedings will be published as a concept paper that will be used in local community sessions to solicit more detailed input on the issues that should be included in the agenda, as well as advocacy and community education strategies that will be developed by January.

This citywide forum was made possible through the generous support of labor. The meeting facilities and other invaluable support was provided by SEIU 32BJ and their Latino Caucus. Additional support was provided by LiUNA Local 78. The organizing and coordination of this event were conducted by a wide array of dedicated volunteers with the technical support of the [National Institute for Latino Policy \(NiLP\)](#). Special thanks go to the herculean efforts of the Campaign's Chair, Javier A. Nieves, who shepherded all these diverse players into the day's unifying message.

Those attending this by-invitation-only forum were: Thomas Acosta, Eric Aviles, Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, Luis Barrios, Moira Batista, Ismael Betancourt Jr., Eddie Borges, Ricardo Bowen, Herson Cabrerias, Pedro Cardi, Cesar Cardona, Juan Cartagena, Freddy Castiblanco, Marcela Celorio, Alfredo Cid, Desiree Claudio, Liz Colon, Samuel Cruz, Jason DelAguila, David Dobosz, Jaime Estades, Myra Y. Estepa, Angelo Falcon, John Flateau, Dennis Flores, George Friedman-Jimenez, Eduardo Giraldo, Yesenia Godoy, Lucia Gomez, Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Ariel Guerrero, Adrian Guzman, Jill Hamberg, Marvin Holland, Rosa Lavergne, Melissa Lomba, Steven Mangual, Graciano Matos, Tania Mattos, Yessenia Mendez, July Meriño, Phuong Nguyen, Javier Nieves, Ana M. Ortiz, Christiaan Perez, Jesus Perez, Kassandra Perez Desir, Veronica Piedra, Izaskun Pineda, Frank Puig, Luis Quiros, Luis O. Reyes, Julia Rivera, Huascar Robles, Stephanie Rodriguez, Margarita Rosa, Efrain Rosado, Jose R. Sanchez, Digna Sanchez, Diana Miriram Rodriguez, Sharon Sanchez, Byron Silva,



Daniel Silvagnoli, Monique St. Marie, Eric Toro, Andres Torres, Miriam Torres, Lazar Treschan, Freddie Vazquez-Rodriguez, and George Zeppenfeldt-Cestero,

For further Information

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