Racial Healing, Social Equity and Immigrant Integration in the American South: Lessons from Community Organizing for Community Philanthropy

By

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Introduction

Those of us from California like to think we are the future of the nation – after all, we host some of the nation’s most dynamic high-tech industries, we have led the county in terms of environmental protection, and we export pop culture trends (for better and for worse) to America and the world.

We’ve also seen ourselves (and been seen) as a harbinger of the future in another fundamental way: the demographic shifts in California between 1980 and 2000 are roughly the demographic shifts the U.S. will experience between 2000 and 2050, and so in many ways our experience foreshadows the American experience in the years to come (again, for better or for worse). But while there is much to be learned from our adjustments and accommodations in that period – an era fraught with fights over immigration, Affirmative Action, and other “hot” racial issues – there is also something different about every area in the country and the way in which residents there will experience, interpret, and reshape the nation’s shifting demography and self-conception.

The South is one such special place. It is partly because, with some exceptions (Florida and Texas), the new demographics of the country – the rapid growth of Latinos and Asian Pacific Islanders, driven historically by immigration and now by U.S.-born ethnic groups – has come a bit late to most of this region. But it is also because the new racial complexity introduced by diverse groups and the challenge of integrating immigrants is occurring on the basis of an extraordinarily riven history of race relations defined largely by a black-white paradigm, including the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and political polarization by race.

How does a rising immigrant presence play out in the context of these more traditional racial fault lines? What does “racial healing” mean when a new group has a limited sense of the regional past while established residents have a low degree of familiarity with the new populations, not to mention an uneven and often fractious history of racial accommodation? What are best practices that can facilitate immigrant integration and a healthier and more inclusive South? And what role can philanthropy, particularly community philanthropy, play in this process?

It’s a long set of questions for a short number of pages but I will try to do justice to the topic with a paper split into three parts. The first section covers the changing demographics of the South, trying to show distinctions between various states but also some commonalities that cut across the region. The second section lifts up best practices in one aspect of immigrant integration – the sort of race relations work that helps to build a more welcoming reception, build specific transformative ties between African Americans and immigrants (important because of underlying economic tensions between the groups), and encourage civic engagement on the part of immigrants themselves. The last section offers implications for philanthropy, conveniently done in a top ten list that can hopefully be more useful than the usual sprawling list of recommendations.

A few caveats, though. First, I do not presume that immigrant integration is the central issue with regard to racial healing in the South. A place so wounded by the scars of separation and subordination has a great deal else to talk about and a significant amount of damage to undo. The focus on
immigrants is simply because this is a newer phenomenon in this area – and because progress on immigrant integration may help to facilitate progress on other issues of race relations, partly by creating a new set of allies for those pursuing a broad social justice agenda.

Second, I do not think of racial inclusion or “racial healing” as primarily an issue of better and more heart-felt conversations. Certainly, that is a part of it and creating the “safe places” to talk through differences is part of the way forward for communities and the nation. But racial healing must tackle not just attitudes and prejudices but also the sort of structural racism that makes it difficult for certain groups, particularly African Americans, to get ahead in our society. Similarly, learning to welcome the newcomer with an open heart and an open mind is a positive first step – but that needs to be matched by programs that help immigrants learn English, get driver’s licenses, enroll their kids in public schools, participate in civic decision-making processes, and secure a firmer place in the American economic and social fabric.

Third, a rose may be a rose may be a rose – but the South is a thousand melodramas being played to different musical scores, against varied social backdrops, and in the context of specific histories of racial relations. I know that – and not only respect this unique territory but also understand that outsiders, no matter how much we may usefully add to the debate, will never capture all the nuances of what is needed (particularly in such a short paper). But there is also something to be gained by some broad stroke analysis and outsider perspectives, and this paper is offered humbly in the hopes that it may further the goal of racial healing and immigrant integration in one of America’s most critical regions.

The Changing Demography of the South

The major driving force in demographic change in the U.S. in the last several decades has been the growth of immigrants and their children. While the share of African Americans in the U.S. populace has remained roughly constant between 1970 and today (and is projected to remain constant in the years to come), the share of Latinos and Asians has been on a dramatic upswing (see Figure 1). Until recently, this has been driven largely by new immigration, although the flow is now tapering off and future demographics will be driven by the children and grandchildren of this immigrant wave.
Immigrants have been part of the change and the traditional thinking has been that the influx of new migrants has only been to a very particular and limited set of locations. Indeed, immigrants have been part of the make-up of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and other major “gateway” cities for centuries. However, over the past two decades, immigrants have been dispersing into new places within our metropolitan landscapes as well as to new states in the nation.

Within metros, a new and perhaps surprising locale has been the transformation of the suburbs: rather than arriving in the central city and eventually migrating to suburbs as economic success occurs – a process called “spatial assimilation” (Massey & Denton, 1985) – many immigrants are leapfrogging directly to suburbs. The second set of new places has new states all together (Singer 2004; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2006) – and one of the key new locales has been the South, particularly the so-called “Deep South.”

Of course, to examine the demographic changes in the South, it is important to first define what we mean by the South – and just how deep it might be. This is tricky territory: it is likely that more serious bar fights than academic fights have been waged about the definition or at least which place is more Southern than another. We could avoid the conflict (wouldn’t that be nice?) by simply ceding to authority and adopting the definition the Census uses for the South: the South Atlantic states of Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Delaware, the East South Central states of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee, and the West South Central States of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Figure 1. Changing Demography of the United States, 1970-2040
But really? Delaware? A place we associate more with Joe Biden’s Amtrak rides to Washington than with a history of King Cotton and frayed race relations? And if we are trying to understand immigrant integration, is it really right to lump together Florida and Texas, both of which have long-standing experience with immigrant communities, with places like Alabama and Georgia where this is a very new phenomenon?

There is likely no definition that will please everyone but for the purposes of this paper, we build on a definition of the South offered in the key paper “Social Justice Organizing in the U.S. South” produced by the Institute for Southern Studies in Durham, North Carolina (Institute for Southern Studies 2009). Its definition was created with an eye to where in the South racial conflicts and economic inequalities are sharpest and, hence, where the challenges and needs are greatest. The states included were Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and both Carolinas. In this paper, we add to that definition Arkansas (heck, I’m writing this for the Clinton School!) and Tennessee, partly for geographic continuity, partly because it was also a Confederate state. Indeed, this set of states, along with the more immigrant-rich areas of Florida and Texas (which we compare them to below), represent all but one (Virginia) of the states that comprised the Confederacy. I will call the larger grouping, including Florida and Texas, the South (sorry, Virginia) and the smaller grouping the “rest of the South.”

So what is the picture of demographic change in the South overall (as I have defined it)? Figures 2 to 5 show the demographic change, both from 1980 to 2010 and then projected forward to 2040 for the South as a whole, then the “rest of the South” (excluding Texas and Florida). The figures make clear that the South as a whole will actually become majority-minority by 2030 – but this will be driven by big changes in Texas and Florida, with Texas already having a majority of people of color and Florida likely to get there in about ten years.
Figure 2. Changing Demographics of the South, 1970 to 2040
This suggests that there are really two Souths. There are the bookends of Texas and Florida that have already experienced significant demographic transitions, and the rest of the South that is poised for a slower but nonetheless important transition as immigrants and their children settle in and make their lives. Putting aside Texas and Florida, in the 1980s the states in the rest of the South started with one or two percent shares of Latinos and then grew dramatically by 2010: Georgia to 9%, North Carolina to 8%, Arkansas to 6%, and South Carolina to 5%, Alabama and Louisiana to 4%, and Mississippi to 2% (from 1%). Most of these places also have about 1 or 2% of the population of Asian descent – Louisiana has 2%, partly because of a Vietnamese presence that we discuss below in the case studies.

Driving that change has been immigration. We show below maps for 1980 and the latter years of the first decade of this century for the percent immigrant-by-census tract in the “rest of the South.” As can be seen there was a dramatic geographic spread of the foreign-born population throughout the South.

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Figure 3. Changing Demographic of the "rest of the South" (excluding Texas and Florida)

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1 We are constrained to the time period 2005-2009 because the nativity data was not collected in the short form distributed to all residents in the 2010 Census. Data on percent immigration comes from the American Community
Figure 4. Percent Immigrant by Census Tract in the "rest of the South" in 1980

Survey; 2005-2009 was the first five year “roll-up” in which answers to the long form questionnaire, which includes nativity questions, was first generated for the census tract level.
The recency of this change can also be seen in the recency of arrival of immigrants themselves. Figure 6 looks at the decades of arrival for Texas, Florida, and the “rest of the South.” In Florida and Texas in 2010, nearly two-thirds of the immigrants had been in the country for more than a decade; only slightly more than half had in the rest of the South. These, in short, are new populations, rapidly growing and likely to be associated with the sort of social disruptions that occur when change occurs.
Figure 6. Recency of Arrival for the Foreign-born, 2010

Another aspect of change is the source of immigrants to the South. What’s particularly remarkable about the Deep South (including Arkansas and Tennessee) is the way Mexican immigration exploded from practically nowhere, as evidenced in Figure 7. Note Arkansas, where the share of immigrants has remained under 10%, but that population has become markedly Mexican. While the graph below only reports on Mexican origin immigrants, other Central American (i.e. Honduran and El Salvadorian) and Asian (i.e. Indian and Vietnamese) immigrants also make up important but smaller shares. The pattern in Louisiana was a bit different; up until 2010, Vietnamese immigrants made up the largest share of newcomers.²

² One factor contributing to the rise of Mexican and Honduran immigrants to Louisiana (17% and 14% of all immigrants in 2010, respectively) was the jobs generated by Hurricane Katrina clean-up. The New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice (profiled, later) is working to secure protections for these workers and those of all backgrounds in post-Katrina New Orleans.
Figure 7. Share of the Immigrant Population from Mexico by State in the South over Time

What this means is that there is not only a recency of immigration – something that can cause disruptions – there is also a particular racialization of immigration (Pastor and Mollenkopf 2012). In many of our Southern states, German, Canadian, and English immigrants were the largest shares of (long-term) immigrants before Mexicans rose in prominence. Because of the predominance of the Mexican (and other Latin American) population, immigration in the current period has become associated with newcomers of a very specific type and stereotype. One articulation of this stereotype, the “Peter Pan fallacy,” is that all the newcomers are young (and never age), something that prevents older residents from seeing both the complexity of family relations and the fact that the future of the economy and society may be reliant on exactly how much those new immigrants and their children are able to achieve (Myers 2008).

Another thing that matters about this Mexican-based stereotype is its effect on other typically disinvested groups – particularly African Americans, a population heavily concentrated in the South. Indeed, the share of Blacks in the population of what we are calling the “rest of the South” is about twice the share of the country as a whole. The South is one of the few areas of the country where in the last few decades there has been consistent growth in the Black population, as some have drifted back to where they (or usually their parents) were born. What does it mean for the presence of immigrants to be growing in this context?

It can mean tension in a way that requires a kind of racial healing – Black and Brown – that has not been part of the lexicon of the South. After all, some have argued that immigrants (in this case, implicitly
synonymous with Latinos) are essentially taking jobs that would otherwise go to African Americans. Nationally this is not an argument that holds much water. Most fine grained studies find that immigrants have both complementary effects (augmenting the workforce and expanding the piece) and substitution effects (displacing particular individuals along the way) – and economists across the ideological spectrum agree that the complementary effects swamp the substitution effects. And while there are generally net gains, the negative impacts of immigrants via direct competition are actually most strongly felt by U.S.-born Latinos in similar occupations and industries (Catanzarite 2004).

In a study on California, a place where immigration has deep roots, my colleagues and I found that immigrants only have a noticeable impact on African Americans at the very bottom of the skill ladder, particularly with regard to certain types of occupational displacement. We also found that there were potential and real gains from the ways in which immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, help to expand regional labor markets, including for African Americans (Pastor, De Lara, and Scoggins 2011). And in that same study, as in others, the main losers (when there were some) were immigrant Latino workers.

But one thing is very important to note: in California, new immigrants and existing immigrants, particularly Latinos, share the bottom of the labor market with African Americans and bear the closest resemblance to each other in terms of labor (and hence are most subject to the substitution effect). And in the national studies, the loss of employment in one location may be more than offset by gain in another location – but that does little to take the edge off the feelings of those who were displaced. And a place where immigration is new, the competition effect is likely to be felt more with existing residents – and this explains some of the Black-immigrant economic tensions in the South.

Such tensions are exacerbated by the tendency of some employers to discriminate against African Americans as well as the “social networks” Latino immigrants employ to seek jobs. Such social networks actually help lower search costs for workers and companies alike: workers can rely on their family and friends rather than want-ads, while employers know that an employee making a recommendation for a hire is likely to make a good recommendation lest they erode their own reputation. This social network effect can be entirely benign in its intent and exclusionary in its practice, resulting in a situation where workplaces shift over from one ethnicity to another.

While the economics are complex, the issues of political displacement are a little more straightforward. African Americans in California fought hard and long for positions of political leadership and have been concerned by the growing political clout of the Latino population. However, partly because so many immigrant Latinos are not citizens and may not even be authorized, much of their political influence depends on the ability to form coalitions. So while there are specific locations of political conflict, particularly in small jurisdictions like Compton, California (Vaca 2004), there is also a sense that building a broader political base could benefit both Blacks and Latinos (Meier et al. 2004; Mindiola, Jr., Niemann, and Rodriguez 2003; Pastor, De Lara, and Scoggins 2011).

The Southern dynamic has similar possibilities, partly because careful cultivation of immigrant allies at this early stage of the game could win steady friends over the longer haul of Southern demographic
change. Whether this longer-term view of positive political benefits will win over a shorter-term view of problematic economic costs will determine the shape of new alliances for inclusion. Further, whether white Southerners simply transfer racial animus to a new group (as unfortunately seems to be the case in certain states) or use this change as an opportunity to more fully address the broader issues of racial healing is also still unknown.

What we do know is that some groups in the South have been taking a lead for a whole new approach – one which seeks to improve the warmth of welcome and build ties between communities face-to-face, race-to-race, and place-to-place. It’s an approach that recognizes that concerns about educational and employment opportunities can be put together in an agenda for “everyday social justice” that brings people together, not apart (Pastor, De Lara, and Scoggins 2011). It’s hard, slow and usually uncelebrated work, but it sows the seeds of a new growth around equity and healing.

**Getting it Right**

Across the country, organizations are working to incorporate immigrants into the fabric of America and to promote what we call “immigrant integration:” economic mobility for, civic participation by, and receiving society openness to immigrants. The reasons for doing this work are many: doing so upholds our values for openness and inclusion, immigrants contribute to our economy so their strength is our strength, and civic engagement that involves the voice of many and not just the few is the very stuff of democracy. It is also the case, as noted above, that some are thinking that inclusion of immigrants now can be part of a broader and more inclusive effort for social justice.

The most important of these efforts are those “on the ground” – that is, in the community. We often find effective coalitions at an elite level: despite their own self-interests, political figures from different ethnic groups may recognize their common interests, and it is also the case that professionals networking in the polite and somewhat sanitized worlds of the university, philanthropy and traditional civic institutions may find it easier to follow Rodney King’s famous admonition: “Can’t we all just get along?” It’s all a bit more difficult to do this in the schools, workplaces and communities where economic pressures are sharp and the sense of competition can be acute.

But it is happening, and not just in places like Los Angeles, where multiracial organizing has become a new norm. In key locales in the South, community organizers and others are helping the region shed its legacy of hostility and retain and improve its reputation for hospitality.

Mississippi, for example, is a state with a relatively small share of immigrants, but it is one where that population is both rubbing elbows with African Americans and with many having arrived in the 1990s, just themselves naturalizing or having children come of age as new voters. This changes the underlying political calculus: Mississippi is the Blackest state in the country but it is still short of a majority. Coupling a Black political base, with the emerging Latino community, particularly given the racially polarized party affiliations in the state, is a route to a stronger and bigger set of constituencies for policies more aligned with social and racial equity.
Partly as a result, the Mississippi NAACP has also been a national stalwart in defending immigrant rights, and was early to condemn restrictive legislation in Arizona and elsewhere. The Black Caucus in the state’s legislature fought to defeat over 200 anti-immigrant bills that were being considered over the past decade and helped to stop the momentum of anti-immigrant laws that swept the South in 2012 (Bacon 2012).

But in Mississippi, it is not just an elite affair: the Mississippi Immigrants’ Right Alliance (MIRA) – established in 2000 – has brought together grassroots leaders for ongoing fights for worker and civil rights. For several years running, MIRA and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference co-hosted the United Colors of Mississippi conference, an opportunity to encourage dialogue between immigrant and Black communities in order to break down myths and stereotypes, build community, and improve community advocacy and mobilization efforts. It is this underlying and broad constellation of forces that has allowed Black legislators to take the stands they have on issues like English-only bills – and incorporating immigrants is seen as part of the continuing work to deconcentrate power and create the basis for a more justice-oriented agenda.(Bacon 2012)

In Louisiana, Hurricane Katrina did more than ravage the region, it also drew a new migrant population to help with the reconstruction. As noted in the data discussion above, until 2010 Vietnamese immigrants were the largest single share of immigrants, and then immigrants of Mexican origin became the largest share. With the rebuild, these day laborers frequently experienced abuse, abandonment, and wage theft at job sites and the New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice was formed in response. The Center engages directly in immigrant issues, with their Congress of Day Laborers and their participation in the National Guestworker Alliance, but the Center’s STAND with Dignity work embodies its larger commitment to racial and social justice. STAND’s low-income resident and worker members work “to ensure the rights of workers and resident to return and recover.” They have been at the forefront of dignified evacuation of low-income residents in subsequent hurricanes and ensuring the quality of shelters, afterwards.

In Alabama, HB 56 – the state’s copycat version of Arizona’s draconian SB1070 – brought together African Americans, immigrants, and whites in a unique way: On the 47th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in March of 2012, the Edmund Pettus Bridge was crossed not just in remembrance of the Civil Rights movement, but in protest of the criminalization of immigrants. Just months before, a coalition of immigrant and African American organizations, including the Alabama New South Coalition, Alabama Arise, Alabama AFL-CIO, Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, had come together to address the state immigration law, the lack of jobs, voting rights, poverty and their root causes. A link was made between the anti-immigrant present and the Jim Crow past: State Senator Hank Sanders (D-Selma) suggested that Alabama was “going back to the past.”

Around the same time, at a more grassroots level, the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Southeastern Immigrant Rights Network, and the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice convened

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4 http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/news/2012/10/02/40336/the-new-values-voters-immigration/
5 http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2011/11/alabama_civic_groups_plan_summ.html
grassroots groups from Arizona, Tennessee, New Orleans, Georgia, Florida, and new leaders from across the state of Alabama – and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration was in the mix, building bridges with the Black community. Moreover, the AFL-CIO organized a delegation of black labor leaders, some observed that HB 56 was more than anti-immigrant, but generally put all “brown people” in peril and felt eerily similar to efforts of decades past.

In Tennessee, the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) has been setting an example for how to welcome immigrants and refugees, in this case more directly building ties with the white population. TIRRC contributed to the defeat of the “English-Only” referendum, upholding Nashville’s image as a welcoming, world-class city. As part of a two-year effort, TIRRC conducted a media campaign in response to Nashville’s proposed “English-only” ordinance in the city council, drawing attention to the personal testimonies of Somali, Sudanese, and Kurdish refugees and helping public figures understand the negative impact such a policy would have on all immigrants and refugees in Nashville. In all, TIRRC mobilized more than 10,000 new American voters and helped lead the largest city-wide coalition in history. One of its early initiatives was the promotion of “Welcome to Shelbyville,” a film that documents the opportunities and complexities of incorporating new immigrants in a small town in Tennessee.

In North Carolina, faith-based organizers are using a broader agenda – similar to the “everyday social justice” framing mentioned earlier – to bring together Black and Brown youth. Named to remind others of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Beloved Community Center (a) is aware of and concerned about the pressure and difficulties that youth and young adults of color face; (b) seeks to reduce violence within and among Latino and Black gangs; and (c) feels that if African Americans and Latinos unite, they can bring greater political and moral pressure on law enforcement officials to improve the way they deal with people of color. It describes itself as advocating on behalf of, standing with, and fighting for “the least, the lost, and the left out” – youth and adults who face injustice and oppression as their daily reality. For faith based groups like these, “spiritual underpinning can help anchor alliance-building work” (Black Alliance for Just Immigration 2010, 9).

Through all of these organizations weaves the common thread that it’s not about just immigrants’ rights. In the field of Black-immigrant organizing, there’s a certain rub felt when African Americans are asked to participate in immigrant rights’ work but receive little in return. In particular, some question why they should work towards immigrant rights when there’s still so much to be done to make real the promise of the civil rights movement. What these case studies show is that those who are “getting it right” bring together the Black and immigrant community about both shared values and shared benefits – that is, both communities practically benefit from advocacy although there may be some give and take in the process. And we think this is why there is some merit to a notion of “everyday social justice” that holds

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8 http://www.welcometoshelbyvillefilm.com/
this work together – it’s about a common vision for better communities in their everyday lives and at an everyday (or grassroots) level.

This sort of common understanding does not happen automatically and really represents a new sort of “racial healing.” After all, immigrants are arriving in new places that already have a history of racial wounds and healing that newcomers are unlikely to understand. The civil rights struggle for African Americans in the South is a continuing thing – and it is up to immigrant advocates to make sure that their communities understand these struggles and how they have set the stage for immigrant progress. But, immigrants, too have their own histories, and African Americans can benefit by learning about how the economic desperation and political dysfunction of many of our southern neighbors (in this case, south of the Rio Grande) has propelled a movement that is by choice, only in the most limited sense of that word.

Without helping communities understand these contexts, animosities can arise: African-Americans will worry about displacement and immigrants will focus just on inequities being committed against them, both in the workplace and in their communities. But the sort of organizing that helps people share histories and experiences – a model developed by the Miami Workers’ Center in some of their organizing bringing together African Americans, Haitians, and Latin American immigrants in that rapidly changing city – can inform the work ahead and help to make real the dream of a “beloved community” (Pastor and LoPresti 2007).

**A Role for Philanthropy**

I have offered thus far a demographic portrayal of the changing South and a discussion of community organizing and outreach efforts that seek to promote immigrant integration as part of a racial healing and social justice agenda. But this is, after all, being written for a Center on Community Philanthropy – and it is incumbent on us to offer some lessons for those who might have the financial resources to support the sort of efforts above and the civic resources (via networks and leadership positions) to be an active part of immigrant integration.

I offer below a set of recommendations that I think would be relevant for philanthropy. I do so with great humility – I know that I have not “lived the South” and that views like mine need to be nuanced by the wisdom (and the wounds) of local experience. Still, the experience I have studying this issue in depth in other locations with longer trajectories of immigrant presence might be useful and help the South to learn from the best practices of – and worst mistakes made – in other areas.

With a bow to David Letterman – and recognition of potentially drifting reader attention– I do this in the form of a succinct “top ten” list of things community and other philanthropists might consider. They are:

1. **Support Welcoming Initiatives that engage long-time residents**

   Welcoming immigrants is a natural expression of the region’s already hospitable culture. Tennessee has already seen great success with this – both in Nashville and Shelbyville, as
mentioned previously. While economic and civic integration can take some time and can be highly complex, welcoming initiatives are more straight-forward – it’s essentially getting longer-time residents to meet and greet newer residents in informal and lightly structured ways. Best practices exist, many of them being codified by Welcoming America. Bringing residents together builds relationships that can form the basis of visioning for a more inclusive America. To boot, this is an opportunity to incorporate the arts in the form of sharing cultural practices, cuisine, and other customs. There are plenty of opportunities for community philanthropy in this arena.

2. **Encourage civic engagement by immigrants**

Civic engagement is deep in the social fabric of the South – and it took on a whole new meaning with the activism of the Civil Rights movement. Immigrant integration requires an engaged populace and this will mean improving naturalization and registration for eligible immigrants – work that is already underway and is more important than ever as voter suppression is threatening the electoral process for immigrant and non-immigrants alike. For those not (yet) eligible for official citizenship, they can still engage: In Los Angeles, immigrant parents have been holding their children’s school accountable, they have joined unions to promote better workplace standards, they have done get-out-the-vote door knocking to encourage those who can vote to do so. Civic engagement is at the heart of our nation’s ability to fulfill the promise of democracy – and community philanthropy can help by promoting citizenship, parent engagement, and other activities.

3. **Make investments in Black-immigrant coalition building**

At the heart of any effort around immigrant integration has to be a commitment to native-born communities that are still struggling – particularly African-American communities. Oftentimes, immigrants enter these exact communities and the supporting institutions need funding to adjust and expand services to new populations. Moreover, funding these institutions and communities will demonstrate a commitment to African Americans that will quell fears about losing scarce resources and, in so doing, will decrease interethnic tensions (Pastor and Ortiz 2009). Resources should also be directed to building Black-immigrant coalitions at the grassroots which means both funding relationship-building as well as practical policy campaigns that will impact both communities.\(^9\) Community philanthropy has a key role in building these very specific bridges of understanding and cooperation.

4. **Invest in grassroots organizing and community building**

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\(^9\) For more on this, see the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (2010) and Pastor, et. al (2011).
As noted, grassroots organizers are doing the hard work of racial healing on the ground. Elite coalitions have their place, but only organizers get at the discontents felt in neighborhoods. In interviews of over 100 grassroots leaders across the country (as part of a family of projects on social movement building), they constantly say that day-to-day base-building work is their bread and butter and that funding it is a constant battle. This is particularly the case in the South where the infrastructure for social justice is reportedly slim (Institute for Southern Studies 2009). By its very nature, community philanthropy is a form of community organizing and the field can help by continually asking what share of its resources are going to this sort of grassroots work.

5. **Promote the right economic story**

One story of the economy goes that there is not enough to go around and we are struggling for an ever-shrinking slice of the pie – or cobbler, since it’s the South. Another goes that there is plenty to go around, but it’s a matter of building a more robust economy and making sure that the opportunity to contribute to and receive from its plenty is shared equitably. Nowhere is this better exemplified than with immigrants who are accused of displacing workers when, in reality, they are largely a complimentary workforce with some very specific sorts of displacement that could be adjusted for with the right policy package – which would include better education for all, stringent anti-discrimination enforcement, higher wage floors, and the like. There is a need to get the story right and promote it in a way that diffuses tensions, especially given the economic stress under which many Americans are living post-2008. Community philanthropy can help by promoting a narrative of abundance rather than scarcity.

6. **Promote ties with business**

While those concerned with racial healing are rarely connected to it, the business sector is central to American life. Wage levels, workplace discrimination, health care and the like are directly under its control. While working with business may be anathema to many activists, that is exactly what is needed. And immigrants may ease the way: businesses have been strong supporters of immigration reform especially in the light of workforce losses that come with ICE raids. In Utah, the business sector helped to create the Utah Compact which has had a goal of creating a more civil conversation and more productive policies around immigrants in the state. And philanthropy can be an important bridge between the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

7. **Fund additional research**

Research is fundamental to making practical changes in the outcomes of people of color in particular and disadvantaged communities in general; it is always important to identify the problem and offer solutions that have a strong evidence base. The data presented above
only begins to scratch the surface with regard to the scale and complexity of change – and more would be better. The publication, “Social Justice Organizing the U.S. South,” highlights the level of disconnection between research and organizers in the South – making this a place for important investment (Institute for Southern Studies 2009). There is a role here for universities – and community philanthropy programs that make a line between the academy and the community.

8. Develop an Immigrant Integration Scorecard

If immigrant integration matters – and I have argued that it does – then it’s important for the South to see improvement in this area. My colleagues and I have found that immigrant integration and healthy, resilient regions go together, so it’s in the best interest of the region to have some friendly competition. We have recently developed a new California Immigrant Integration Scorecard that measures immigrant integration across four categories and 10 regions in the state and, as a result, highlights regions that are doing well so that others can go to them for best practices. It also suggests a statewide agenda for immigrant integration that, among other things, would target investments in places with little infrastructure for integration. As the South gets started with this work, now is the time to lay a baseline analysis – and community philanthropy can help.

9. Act as a civic leader

Oftentimes philanthropy is either too controlling or too demure – and struggles to find just the right role. That role, I suggest, is as a civic leader that both funds the right type of work and convenes the right type of organizations. The point here is not force a marriage of unlikely partners, but to bring together organizations and facilitate with a purpose. For example, the California Community Foundation convenes the Los Angeles Council on Immigrant Integration with the explicit goal of promoting immigrants in the region through a multi-sector collaboration. This is not a sort of neutral meeting of the minds, but an intentional coming together that has made some practical impacts in policy. So while funders should remain hands off, to a large degree, they would do well to do more than simply fund.

10. Insist to national philanthropy that the South is the future

With the country changing in ways that have often outpaced the South, it may be easy to think that this region is a backwater where change will come slowly if at all. But this is not entirely consistent with history: from the South came the civil rights movements and a vast (albeit uneven) expansion of human rights in the country. Moreover, given the likely slowing of demographic change in more mature areas, the South is one of the locales

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10 For the California Immigrant Integration Scorecard, see here: http://csii.usc.edu/CAimmSCORECARD.html
where change will occur in the next few decades. At the same time, the South is very under-resourced in terms of national philanthropic dollars; attention goes to the coasts. Community philanthropy needs to be in the lead making the case that the South offers a new and important intersection between racial healing, social equity, and immigrant integration – and that national funders should get on board.

**Conclusion**

When some people hear the words “racial healing,” they go running for the doors, partly because they think a person using that expression might just be running to the past. Indeed, the term can evoke a sense of grievance, legacy, and pain – and suggest that it might be a pain as you try to get better during the healing process.

But there’s an important way in which racial healing is all about the future not the past. After all, if you examine the nation’s demographics, you quickly realize that the upcoming generation is no longer white – indeed, 2011 was the first year in which the majority of births were to people of color, and by 2020, the majority of all youth will be kids of color.

Given that shift, there is plenty of reason to get busy on the racial healing front. After all, racial healing really has two complementary senses – creating better relations between groups and changing the structural conditions that produce racial inequality. And this is more relevant than ever: we cannot afford an America in which the newest working Americans have been left underprepared by inadequate schools and job training programs, partly because racial distance and difference has led to an older generation not willing to make the public investments that were once made for them.

In preparing for this coming America, immigrant integration is central. While the newest generations are dominantly U.S.-born, they do have parents – and how those parents do in this society will determine the trajectory of their children and the nation as a whole.

Like racial healing, immigrant integration also has two complementary meanings or senses. The first is attitudinal: we must strive to be a welcoming nation, immigrants must strive to achieve and adjust, and we must all strive to build better relationships between long-standing residents and new arrivals.

Fortunately, the case studies above have demonstrated that there is a wide range of community-building best practices that can guide us on that front.

But the second is structural. The country knows full well the basic recipe for immigration reform – a combination of tighter border controls, a path to legalization, and a more regulated (and larger) legal flow of labor for the future – but we seem to have let anxiety about the changing complexion of America get in the way of developing solid policy that will serve all of America. And just as important as what we do (or fail to do) on immigration policy: we have a significant presence of the foreign-born now and we are not promoting the integration of those individuals.
In an earlier era, we count on key institutions like unions, municipal governments and political machines, and even a widespread military draft to facilitate immigrant economic mobility and civic integration. In today’s more fragmented society, we have a more haphazard approach, seeming to hope that there will be few consequences to underfunding adult English as a Second Language classes, hiking the fees to pursue naturalization, and engaging in draconian enforcement schemes that frighten both documented and undocumented immigrants (many of whom may live in “mixed status” households).

But with our very national future relying on the social and economic integration of these immigrants and their children, we need a more intentional approach. This is true all over the U.S. and perhaps particularly important for the South for two reasons. First, this is a new group arriving in the context of already riven race relations; getting it right for them could open wider the conversation about how to deal with some of the original sins of racism against African Americans in the region. Second, the demographic change is happening later and slower here – and so the South can borrow from everyone else’s experiences even as it begins to develop, as with Welcoming America, a set of best practices that others will want to emulate as well.

In moving toward this new future, community philanthropy has an important set of roles. I have mentioned some of them above: act as a convener, invest in grassroots efforts, draw attention to the region, develop inter-community bonds, and help to secure the support of business to support immigrant integration. But another key role will be simply to find and broadcast new innovative approaches that merge the concerns of racial healing, social equity and immigrant integration.

There is a long road ahead – but there is an old saying, rephrased from a poem by Spanish poet Antonio Machado, that you “make the road by walking.” The basic meaning: even when the path isn’t clear, your commitment should be and the way will be revealed. Those working on immigrant integration in the South are exploring new territory in a racial landscape scarred by old wounds. It’s tough but admirable work – and we (and they) can learn from their slips as well as their successes. I trust that this paper will be a small but helpful contribution to the learning needed to build a stronger, more inclusive region and nation.
References


