

Welcome to the National Black Latino Summit.

With demographic projections showing America will become a “majority-minority” nation in just a few short decades, there has been much hyperventilating about the supposed divides between the nation’s Black and Latino communities.

But from the perspective of the thousands of advocates working on the ground and the millions of Americans living in our neighborhoods, the relationship between the nation’s largest communities of color is far more nuanced—and far more hopeful.

By lifting up successful cross-cultural initiatives and facing our points of friction head-on, we can deepen and strengthen the ties that bind our communities already. Some areas of friction certainly exist, but there is far more that joins our communities together than pulls them apart.

We all want to make sure our children have good schools, our neighborhoods are affordable and healthy, and our families are economically secure.

Empowering person-to-person connections between communities is an important step, but to truly enact the change we seek, we must come together to create a more comprehensive policy agenda and effective alliance building strategy.

The Steering Committee that is guiding this effort recognizes that this meeting is but one important step in this process. We have designed the meeting around three key objectives:

1. Provide participants an opportunity to build new relationships and to become familiar with the alliance-building work already underway across the country
2. Facilitate an authentic, cross-cultural dialogue that explores the barriers and solutions to building alliances and achieving equity
3. Invite participants to take leadership in this alliance-building process by making a commitment to join one of the issue-based working groups

To ground the dialogue in the real issues participants are tackling at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, we commissioned “working briefs” on these policy areas:

- Criminal justice
- Education
- Job creation
- Health
- Transportation
- Environmental justice
- Housing
- Immigration reform

Beginning with this historic meeting in Los Angeles, we propose to work together during the next six months to identify areas of meaningful cross-cultural collaboration, with an eye toward the “low-hanging fruit”—short- to near- term goals for positive action that offer the possibility of more attainable future successes. Propelled and guided by the Steering Committee’s “Call to Action”, working groups will be organized to:

- Help participants identify strategic issue areas that have significant policy implications for our communities.
- Assess and respond to historic and contemporary barriers to meaningful Black-Latino partnerships on common advocacy agendas.
- Identify and connect existing initiatives that hold promise for sustained Black-Latino policy advocacy partnerships.
- Work with the Steering Committee to help develop a comprehensive policy agenda, to be unveiled in a spring event in Washington, DC.

We anticipate much of this work will be conducted via telephone conferences, with information-sharing via the Summit website. An in-person meeting including the co-chairs of each working group, writers of issue briefs, and steering committee members may also be needed prior to the Spring Summit. We seek not to duplicate or take away energy from current work, but rather to bring leaders together proactively to build a collective strategy for organizing and advocacy work.

Though it is a vital and necessary first step, creating new and stronger alliances between and among our communities will not be enough to make the change we seek. We must forge new partnerships with Asian Americans, Native Americans, White Americans and all people of good will to make the nation truly just and rich in opportunity.

The way forward will not be without obstacles or missteps. But the foundation for a strong cross-cultural movement for equity is already laid. From youth groups in inner-city Los Angeles fighting for educational equity to new coalitions to protect the rights of immigrants in the South and the Midwest, successful bridges have already been built between our communities.

By spreading these stories of hope throughout the nation, we can sow seeds of promise in countless communities.

Thank you for joining us on this tremendously important journey as we seek Solidarity for America’s Future.