



AFRICAN AMERICAN
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
TRANSFORMATION STUDY

Afro-New Mexico: A Sit-down and Snapshot

Executive Summary

Prepared by Hakim Bellamy, Shawna Brown, Everette Hill & Cathryn McGill
August 15, 2014

aacetsnm@gmail.com



The African American community in New Mexico has a deep, strong history that we need to build on...



May 21, 2014 Advisory Board Convening
Albuquerque, NM

(I see) the gap between the sharing of knowledge (as a challenge). As the generational gap increases we lose more and more information between the baby boomer and millennial generations.

*Cynthia Laughlin
Phase II participant*

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the African American Community Economic Transformation Study (A.A.C.E.T.S.) conducted during the time period beginning May 15th, 2014 and ending August 15th, 2014. Over the duration of this three-month period the A.A.C.E.T.S. Leadership Team (hereinafter referred to as “the Team”) implemented a four part data collection and analysis study with a purposive and diverse sample of service providers and opinion leaders within the African American community in Central New Mexico.

Objective

To design a research project that identifies assets in the African American community (Individual/Human, Institutional, CBO/Association, Physical and Economic Assets). Heavily reliant upon the individual relationships and community capital of the principal researchers (the Team), this study is designed to identify and map those assets held in high regard by the community. In our experience, this is unique because the community has historically been examined using a deficit model (needs-based vs. assets-based). We offer this research to complement previously conducted needs-based analyses in an effort to bring about systemic and sustainable change in the African American community in New Mexico.

Approach and Methods

Employing a Community Based Participatory Research (CPBR) approach. The four phase process of research included the following methods: Literature Review (Phase One), Focus Groups (Phase Two), In Depth Interviews (Phase Three) and Data Analysis. Intending to produce an asset map and gap analysis, the Team engaged in assessing community strengths and dynamics, identifying priority issues, disseminating findings, interpreting research and feeding back.

Process

This four phase process included a literature review (phase one, ongoing), establishing and convening an advisory committee (phase two, May 2014), conducting individual interviews (phase three, June/July 2014) and data preparation and analysis (phase four, July/August 2014).

1 Literature Review

Included canvassing public records for public information on studies targeting or providing relevant data on the African American community in New Mexico. This literature review is current through the recent report by Southwest Poverty Law Center Racial Justice In New Mexico: A 10 Year Plan.

2 Advisory Committee Retreat

From an initial list of 93 people of influence in the African American community, a group of 24 convened to participate in the daylong Advisory Committee Retreat on May 15th 2014.

3 Individual Interviews

As a result of the retreat, 121 individuals were identified as assets within the African American community. The Team strategically allocated assignments to ensure maximum participation (subverting fragmentation) and conducted in-person, telephone and electronic interviews. The response rate was 43% (52 interviews completed).

4 Analysis

The Team convened for a series of meetings to review and process data. Upon aggregating data, sharing individual interpretations of data, and agreeing on emergent themes and affinity groups, the Team arrived at 3 recommendations for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Summary of Findings

A frequency analysis of the results from the Advisory Retreat shows Individual/Human Assets receiving the greatest number of responses (even after controlling for repeat responses) with 121 entries. CBO/Association Assets was second with 48 entries. Followed by Economic Assets with 46 entries, Physical Assets with 34 entries and Institutional Assets with 7 entries. Moved by the overwhelming slant of the data, the Team dove into the third phase of the study by conducting 52 individual interviews with community members frequently identified in phase two. This research led to emergent themes (theme analysis) in three categories regarding the successes, challenges and desires of the African American community. Analyzing this data (phase four) led to the following data trends.

- A robust and consistent communication infrastructure devoid of factionalism, “blind spots” (overlooked subsections of the community), and partisan ownership was cited as a community need.
- Access to power (both financial and governmental) was cited as a community desire. This desire was oftentimes articulated with challenges regarding Black wealth (“More than money...”), home and property ownership, and economic opportunities (business, entrepreneurship, employment etc.). Feelings of community empowerment were additionally tied to a desire for the community to define its own needs.
- Education, across the board, was seen as a challenge in the community. This includes, but is not limited to, early childhood education (cost and affordability), cultural disparities in K-12 (different learning styles, disciplinary biases, etc.), college preparedness, mentorship infrastructure and occupational development (lifelong learning).

- A comprehensive, intergenerational leadership development program was frequently cited as a community need. This program includes, but is not limited to, youth development with an emphasis on cultural preservation, building community capital (wealth), and amassing political influence (voice, seat at the table, etc.). Much of this sentiment was geared at developing and installing the next generation of leaders, while validating and documenting the contributions of current and past community leaders.
- A statewide strategic planning effort that includes a leadership development component for the current cohort of African American community leaders was cited as an immediate need for the community. This multi-meeting, multi-year engagement must focus on cross sector collaborations within the community. This sentiment includes the acknowledgement that a new, more inclusive model for aggregating political influence and disseminating critical information is necessary to supplement the traditional “Black Church” approach. A new collaborative infrastructure across shared outcomes rather than shared values must be developed in order for the community to move forward. New alliances will need to be forged and new tools will have to be learned by all.
- A physical and psychological sense of place was cited as a significant challenge (as well as shown in the dearth of responses regarding Physical Assets during phase two). The sense of place is significant as a space for dialogue and ongoing community collaboration (strategic planning, cultural preservation, innovation, economic incubator/engine, etc.). There are no institutions that anchor the African American community in New Mexico, and the only Black brick and mortar infrastructure that are not State or City owned are a small number of Black businesses and Black churches. A physical location is not simply a panacea to community fragmentation, it is the cathartic and collaborative process of building a new community and owning it.

ASSETS DATABASE CREATED (nmlblackpages.com)

Through data gathered in Phase I and II the Leadership Team found that a consistent communication infrastructure is lacking in the African American community. To combat the gap, our team created the New Mexico African American Assets Database.

The website serves as a database of assets within the African American community which allows organizations to find potential collaborators to work with in order to collaborate to address pressing issues within the African American Community.

The secondary function of the website is to serve as a database for those who are new to New Mexico and are searching for resources within the African American community.

The tertiary function of the website is to allow the greater community to locate African American organizations for resources

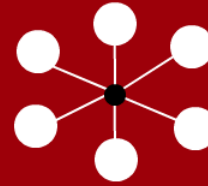
Recommendation Number One



Leadership Development Institute

Establish a leadership development institute for the African American community that will support the development of the next generation of leadership, increase the capacity and connectivity of the current leadership, and sufficiently honor current and past leadership. It is clear from the frequency of data in this study that our greatest asset is our people. To overcome fragmentation in our community, dynamics associated with native vs. newly-arrived New Mexicans, and the need to integrate civil-rights era strategies with 21st century technologies and tools; we need to build effective leadership pathways through efforts like Louisiana's Black Organization for Leadership Development (BOLD) and strategic relationship development through efforts similar to New Mexico's Strategic Leadership Institute (SLI).

Recommendation Number Two



Create a Hub Organization

Establish a community-based entity that functions as a central hub organization with the capacity to act as both a financial and capacity building support to the African American community. During the data gathering, the Team found that the African American community lacks a physical meeting space and central non-governmental organization. The role of the central entity will be one of building capacity within the organizations by receiving funds earmarked for African American entities by delivering services such as (but not limited to) strategic planning, accounting, development, employee giving, estate planning, communications, marketing, new media, arts based community organizing, curriculum development, professional development, etc.

Recommendation Number Three



Communications Network Infrastructure

Establish a communications network/infrastructure that will define the ways that the African American community in New Mexico connects and communicates with its members, allies, target institutions and broader communities. During the study process, the Team determined that there is a need to establish internal and external communication strategies. Internal strategies to address fragmentation, factionalization and duplication of community efforts. External strategies to increase awareness, celebrate and educate the broader public about issues, projects, challenges and victories in the community. This collective strategy must be a part of a larger strategic planning process that identifies a clear and consistent organizing plan for the African American community that is strategically aligned with the community's overall mission and organizing strategy. Some tangible products that have been effective in other communities are periodic news publications like Denver's BlackPages, the Chicago Defender and the AFRO. Additionally, organizations within the African American community would benefit from the capacity building components of the hub organization (Recommendation #2) in the area of marketing, media literacy and communications.

When we say "Community" ... all we are saying is that we want to be in better relationship with each other. – David Hunt