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Toward 2050 in Texas

A Roundtable Report on Houston's Experience as One of the Most Diverse Metros in the Nation

Julie Ajinkya March 2013



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About Progress 2050

Progress 2050, a project of the Center for American Progress, seeks to lead, broaden, and strengthen the progressive movement by working toward a more inclusive progressive agenda—one that truly reflects our nation's rich ethnic and racial diversity. By 2050 there will be no ethnic majority in our nation and to ensure that the unprecedented growth of communities of color also yields future prosperity, we work to close racial disparities across the board with innovative policies that work for all.

About PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works®. Founded in 1999, PolicyLink connects the work of people on the ground to the creation of sustainable communities of opportunity that allow everyone to participate and prosper. Lifting Up What Works is our way of focusing attention on how people are working successfully to use local, state, and federal policy to create conditions that benefit everyone, especially people in low-income communities and communities of color. We share our findings and analysis through our publications, website and online tools, convenings, national summits, and in briefings with national and local policymakers.

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Introduction and summary

The United States is rapidly approaching the point where there will no longer be any clear racial or ethnic majority—the most recent census projections predict this will happen as early as 2043.¹ At the same time, the fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups were hit first and worst by the recent economic downturn and face persistent barriers to achieving the levels of education, health, and employment that our nation needs to succeed in the global economy. As the entire country undergoes this dramatic demographic transformation, leaders in government, business, philanthropy, and the civic sector must take steps now to prepare for a more diverse future.

In many communities, these demographic shifts are well underway. People of color are already the majority in four states and in more than 300 counties across the country.² And children of color comprise the majority of children in 10 states and 35 large metro areas.³ Community leaders working in these places may well have wisdom and relevant strategies to share with other communities preparing for similar population shifts.

It is in this spirit that Progress 2050—a project of the Center for American Progress—and PolicyLink—a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity—partnered to hold a series of roundtables in communities that have already experienced aspects of this demographic shift. Over the last year we have traveled around the country to these bellwether communities to have a local dialogue with key community members about three questions:

- What are the opportunities and challenges of these demographic changes?
- What strategies are working at the local level that can inform other places and national policy?
- How can advocates shift the conversation—that most often occurs around demographic change—from one that focuses on deficits and gaps to one that is squarely focused on the opportunity of diversity?

This is the fifth report in a series documenting these roundtable discussions and describes a conversation that took place in Houston, Texas, in March 2012. Previous roundtables took place in Arlington, Virginia (July 2011); Los Angeles, California (October 2011); San Joaquin Valley, California (October 2011); and Raleigh, North Carolina (December 2011).

Roundtable participants included community activists, policy researchers, business leaders, academics, and staff from elected offices. (See the full list of convening participants on page 18.) The range of their expertise was diverse, spanning issues including—but not limited to—economic development, fair lending, financial security, education, incarceration, civil rights, and civic engagement.

We chose Texas—and specifically the city of Houston—as the site for this discussion because the Houston area is now the eighth-most diverse metro area in the nation, with 60 percent of its residents coming from communities of color.⁴ Over the past three decades, Houston has experienced explosive population growth—growing from 3.2 million people to 5.9 million people—mostly driven by the region’s communities of color. People of color accounted for 78 percent of the area’s population growth in the 1980s, 91 percent of growth in the 1990s, and 93 percent of growth in the 2000s.⁵ And as the 2012 election turned all eyes on the massive demographic shift that our nation is experiencing, Texas is a prime example of a state where both parties will be paying close attention and actively trying to engage its diverse population in the democratic process.

Houston has also experienced consistently strong job growth. Houston’s leisure and hospitality sector, for example, saw a job growth rate of 8.4 percent in the past year—four times the sector’s national increase of 2.1 percent. Moreover, its construction employment increased by 7 percent, compared to just 0.1 percent nationally.⁶ Many of these new jobs, however, are low wage, depressing incomes as a result. And since the Great Recession of 2007–2009, job growth is not keeping pace with the growing labor force. At the same time, the region’s fastest-growing groups face some of the highest poverty and unemployment and low levels of educational attainment.

Even still, our roundtable participants were optimistic that, with the right investments and changes in policy, the Houston area could make huge gains and take advantage of all the opportunities inherent in the region’s growing diversity.

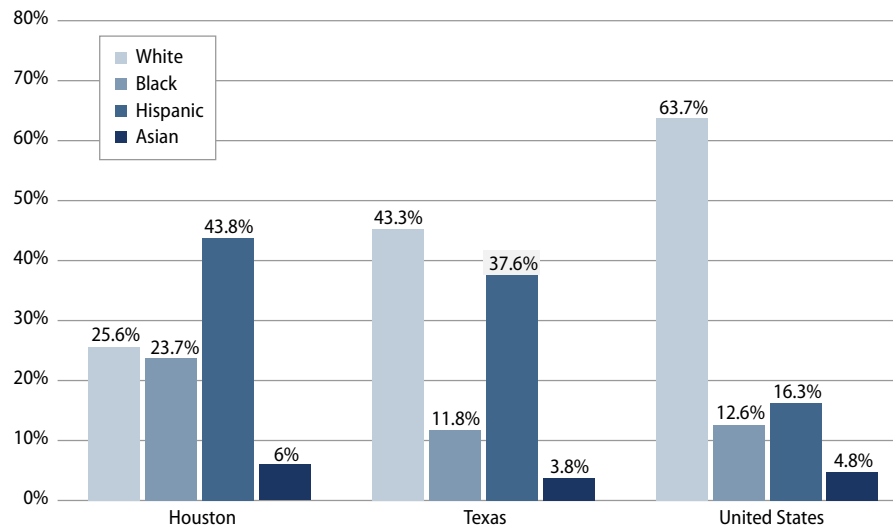
We begin our account with some demographic context about Texas, particularly the Houston region. We then discuss the prominent themes—employment and education, integration, and civic engagement—that roundtable participants explained were the most pressing issues to address in the region, all the while highlighting best practices in the Houston area that can be employed on the national level.

Houston's demographic shift

Stephen Klineberg, co-director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, kicked off the roundtable discussion with a presentation explaining how Texas is already experiencing the population shifts that await the rest of the nation.

Between 2000 and 2010 Texas's population grew by 20.6 percent, compared to a national growth rate of 9.7 percent.⁷ (see Figure 1) This growth is largely due to the state's swelling Latino population: The number of Hispanics in Texas grew from 6.7 million in 2000 to 9.5 million in 2010—19 percent of the nation's total Hispanic population.⁸ And in 2010, Hispanics were the majority in 51 Texas counties.⁹ But non-Hispanic groups have influenced the state's population growth as well. In 2010 Texas's African American and Asian American populations—2.8 million people and 850,000 people, respectively—were also the third-largest in the country.¹⁰

FIGURE 1
Comparing Texas demographics with the rest of the nation



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. "Texas QuickFacts" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>; U.S. Census Bureau. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010" March 2011. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

Klineberg also described the demographic transformation of Harris County, home to the city of Houston. Whereas Houston was historically considered a biracial southern city—where power was concentrated in the hands of white men—Klineberg stated that over the past three decades, Houston has become one of the most culturally diverse metropolitan areas in the country, and all of its racial and ethnic groups, including whites, are now “minorities”—the exact shift that the rest of the nation will experience over the next three decades. What’s more, without immigration influxes—primarily from Asia and Latin America—and the births of children of immigrants, Houston would be losing its status as a major growing city—as is already the case for Philadelphia, Buffalo, and many other cities.

The census figures for Harris County over the last six decades illustrate this demographic shift. In 1960 non-Hispanic whites made up 73.9 percent of the Harris County population.¹¹ During the boom years of the 1970s, the county’s white population grew sharply, but that growth was soon curbed by the oil bust and ensuing recession. As the county’s white population dropped in the 1990s, the African American, Hispanic, and Asian American populations grew. By 2011 Harris County was 41.4 percent Hispanic, 19.3 percent African American, 6.4 percent Asian American, and just 32.7 percent white.¹²

Along with the major immigration capitals of Los Angeles and New York City, and closely following upon Miami, San Francisco, and Chicago,¹³ Houston is at the forefront of the new diversity that is refashioning the sociopolitical landscape of urban America. According to Klineberg, no city has been transformed as fully, completely, suddenly, and irreversibly as Houston.

Houston has also experienced the same growing racial generation gap that the rest of the country currently faces. While 57 percent of all those age 65 and over in the 2010 census for Harris County were non-Hispanic whites, 76 percent of the county’s children—those under age 18—were people of color. The rest of the nation is already experiencing this gap, with whites comprising 80 percent of those age 65 and over in 2010, and projections estimating that the under-18 population will become majority communities of color by 2019.¹⁴ The problem that this generation gap presents is that the younger generations in Houston and the rest of the nation at large are not only disproportionately people of color, but also generally far less privileged in terms of their levels of income, education, health status, and life opportunities.

According to Klineberg, this demographic shift and growing generation gap present us with a challenge to make sure that children of color, who are the most likely to live in poverty, are not cut off from their future. Moreover, he argued that the Houston region must work to overcome a broader sense of disconnectedness that exists between its white population and its residents of color. Barriers between these communities translate into inequitable distribution of the region's assets and investments, meaning that communities of color will continue to be left behind in spite of regional growth.

Demographic change offers Houston challenges and opportunities

The roundtable participants elaborated on the challenges that this demographic shift has presented to the Houston area, but they also described diversity as an asset that can be leveraged to ensure the future prosperity of the region as a whole. While some of this work is already underway, participants suggested areas where there is more to be done. The roundtable discussion revolved around three general themes:

- Educating and training the workforce is key to building a strong economy.
- Increasing diversity must be accompanied by greater integration.
- Encouraging civic engagement gives voice to Houston's communities of color.

Let's look at these themes in further detail.

Educating and training the workforce is key to building a strong economy

Texas—specifically the Houston metro area—is experiencing strong economic growth even in today's difficult economic climate. In fact, Houston has topped the list on economic recovery measures since the recession. Between 2006 and 2011, for instance, Houston added more than 100,000 private-sector jobs, more than any other major U.S. city, most of which actually lost jobs over the same period due to the recession.¹⁵ Additionally, in 2011 the Houston area alone saw \$3.35 billion in construction contracts, and an industry expert recently predicted that number would increase by 4 percent to 13 percent in 2012, with the expected volume of commercial construction contracts in 2012 reaching \$3.5 billion to \$3.8 billion.¹⁶

Yet economic indicators demonstrate that people of color are not benefiting equally from this growth. Roundtable participants expressed concern with higher rates of unemployment and poverty for the Houston metro region's communi-

ties of color. In 2010, for instance, while the region's African Americans had the highest rate of unemployment—9.8 percent—the region's other communities of color also had higher unemployment rates than that of the region's white community. The rate is 6 percent for Latinos, 5.7 percent for Native Americans and Alaska Natives, and 4.7 percent for Asians and Pacific Islanders, while it is 4.3 percent for whites. Additionally, while one in six Houston metro residents live below the poverty level, this number is one in four for the region's African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans and Alaska Natives.¹⁷

What can be done: Educating the future workforce and engaging all sectors in promoting diversity

The rapid growth of Houston's economy has made it essential to prepare students of color for entry into the workforce. What's more, the "resource economy" of the industrial era—for which Houston was formerly so favorably positioned due to its abundance of nonreproducible natural resources—has now transitioned in large part to a new high-tech, knowledge-based, fully worldwide marketplace. This new economy has less to do with natural resources and more to do with human resources, meaning that well-paying jobs today require high levels of technical skills and educational credentials.

Klineberg noted that responses to a 2011 Rice University survey signal Houston-area residents' awareness of these changes. In the survey, 78 percent of Houston-area residents disagreed that "A high school education is enough to get a good job," and the percent of people who spontaneously mentioned education when asked to name the biggest problem facing people in Houston jumped to 7.6 percent in 2011 from just 1.7 percent in 2009 and 2 percent in 2010.¹⁸

The impact of educational attainment on employment is well known. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of September 2012, 11.3 percent of U.S. individuals who have not graduated from high school are unemployed, whereas that number drops to 4.1 percent for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁹

But in a world where education is absolutely critical, Texas is ranked 50th of the 50 states in the number of high school graduates in the population age 25 and over: Only 80 percent of Texas adults had at least a high school diploma in 2009. And while graduation rates for the state's black and Hispanic students topped 80 percent for the first time in state history in 2011, there are concerns that these

gains are exaggerating the true progress that has been made—particularly given that some states can exclude a significant number of young people from their dropout rates, including those who leave the state’s public schools to move to another state or country, to attend private school, or to be homeschooled.²⁰

To prosper in the new worldwide economy, Houston—and the nation as a whole—will need to nurture a far more educated workforce. The roundtable participants discussed the importance of engaging different industries in meeting this goal, and argued that important stakeholders such as the private companies, foundations, and nonprofits that play a large part in the local economy should better engage and promote the importance of diversity.

Houston is home to several of the nation’s largest companies. In 2012, 25 Houston businesses were ranked on the Fortune 500 list, including oil magnates such as ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips.²¹ Although the future of these businesses is tied to the strength of Houston’s workforce, convening participants expressed their feeling that these companies have largely remained isolated from policy debates about education and other areas where diversity has an impact.

But one such initiative—the Digital Connectors program—has already made great strides in preparing the region’s diverse youth for the area’s IT workforce’s needs. Digital Connectors is the product of a partnership between Neighborhood Centers Inc.—one of the city’s organizations that focuses on economic and social development—and Comcast. (see box)

Increasing diversity must be accompanied by greater integration

According to the Kinder Institute’s 2012 Houston-area survey, Houston residents strongly value the diversity of their city. Specifically, the percentage who thought that increasing diversity in Houston would eventually become “a source of great strength for the city,” rather than “a growing problem,” grew from 55 percent in 1996 and 61 percent in 2006 to 69 percent in both 2010 and 2012.²²

Perceptions of ethnic relations in Houston are also improving. The share of survey respondents giving positive evaluations to the relations among ethnic groups in the Houston area demonstrated a marked improvement over levels recorded in previous years—49 percent in 2012, up from 21 percent and 23 percent for the early 1990s and 42 percent in both 2010 and 2011.²³

Promising practice: Houston's Digital Connectors

The Digital Connectors program is the product of a partnership between Neighborhood Centers Inc. and Comcast and aims to prepare youth to enter the region's growing IT field. Youth participants enhance their opportunity for meaningful and financially rewarding employment while developing leadership skills as evidenced by participation in service-learning projects helping their neighborhoods access and benefit from technology.

A dedicated instructor leads the Digital Connectors classes through the 156-hour curriculum that explores 12 core competency areas ranging from personal development to advanced technology skills. Other topics covered include leadership and diversity, workforce

development, financial literacy, software and programming, media production, and civic journalism.

In addition to providing this classroom training, the program also underlines the importance of connecting youth to their communities. One past service-learning project, for instance, involved Digital Connectors from the Ripley House Neighborhood Center dedicating 600 hours of their time to children and seniors in the community. The participants helped children understand how to safely navigate the Internet and taught seniors how to order medical prescriptions online, saving them both time and money.

But despite residents' optimism about increasing diversity, the roundtable participants pointed out that housing segregation remains a persistent challenge to integration. Other participants pointed out that Houston's diversification has been uneven, with some suburban areas experiencing more integration than urban areas.

Recent housing data underscore their concerns. Over the past 20 years, the Houston region has experienced a decline in segregation between racial and ethnic groups, although its levels of segregation remain high.²⁴ One in four of the region's unemployed residents, for example, live in neighborhoods where at least 90 percent of the residents are people of color.²⁵ While there was modest improvement in segregation between whites and African Americans from 0.70 in 1990 to 0.64 in 2010—a value of 0 denotes complete integration and 1 denotes complete segregation—segregation between whites and Asian Americans remained essentially unchanged and segregation between whites and Hispanics actually rose slightly over the same period, from 0.52 in 1990 to 0.55 in 2010. The greatest decline in segregation during this period occurred between African Americans and Latinos.²⁶

The roundtable participants also discussed the strong foundation presence in Houston, particularly community foundations that pool donations into a coordinated investment and grant-making process that focuses on improving a given place. According to the Foundation Center, Houston is home to two of the 20

largest Community Foundations in the country by total giving: Communities Foundation of Texas, Inc., and the Greater Houston Community Foundation.²⁷ Yet participants expressed their concern that nonprofits were not succeeding in creating coalitions that maximized the results of foundation investments. Participants suggested that mentorship and volunteerism could help connect the region's businesses and foundations with Houston's broader community.

Jennifer Touchet of Rebuilding Together Houston—Houston's largest community outreach organization working to preserve affordable homeownership and revitalize neighborhoods—described the potential benefits of direct volunteer work. In her opinion, such programs build relationships and increase exposure between the wealthier, largely white volunteers and low-income, inner-city diverse residents. Rebuilding Together Houston offers community service opportunities to more than 5,000 volunteers every year while renovating and repairing hundreds of homes annually with market value of nearly \$5.4 million.²⁸

Touchet has worked with corporate volunteers and emphasized that her organization and others have a duty to build cultural awareness training into volunteer opportunities so that volunteers do not reinforce their stereotypes about communities of color through volunteer work. Such mentorship could provide promising opportunities for employees of private companies as well as foundations to promote diversity in their institutional settings.

Finally, the roundtable participants also discussed the importance of building capacity in communities to make sure that institutions do not prosper at the expense of Houston's diverse communities. Specifically, Niiobli Armah of the Center for Health Equity and Evaluation Research, urged convening participants to focus on leveraging the vast amounts of research money available in Houston into making concrete changes that would benefit Houston's communities. He argued that researchers should not be allowed to gather data from Houston's residents and then return to academia without leaving something behind. According to Armah, Houston's nonprofits need to work with those researchers to make sure that they “start leaving capacity in the communities.” The region's businesses and foundations should also understand that capacity building helps the common good. Ensuring the resilience of the region's diverse communities will also ensure that the prosperity these institutions enjoy continues in the long term.

What can be done: Making diversity visible

Participants explained that the lack of integration in Houston creates a barrier to engaging diverse stakeholders on issues relevant to Houston's future. One participant stated that if Houston's "decision makers, policymakers, and corporations ... don't see the diversity, they don't see the need."

To flourish in the years ahead, the region will need to develop into a much more integrated and inclusive multiethnic society—one in which equality of opportunity is truly made available to all of Houston's residents, and all of its communities are encouraged to participate as full partners in shaping Houston's future.

According to convening participant Eric Lyons of the Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Houston Partnership has already taken such steps toward building a more inclusive region and promoting collaboration between different communities. The partnership established the Common Ground Initiative, which coordinates work between several organizations—including the Hispanic Chamber, the Asian Chamber, the Indo-American Chamber, and the Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce—on policy initiatives such as immigration reform and educational funding. (see box) Lyons stated that the success of the Common Ground Initiative stems from its focus on the economic frame for its policies and its ability to underscore the common economic challenges and opportunities that Houston's diverse communities face.

Encouraging civic engagement gives voice to Houston's communities of color

Convening participants felt that robust civic participation was key to identifying and addressing solutions to the problems of inequity and segregation described above. Yet participants argued that advocacy organizations and residents of color face numerous obstacles to civic engagement—both on a local and national level.

Voting, for instance, was discussed as the most basic form of civic participation, yet low registration and turnout rates mean that the growing numerical strength of communities of color across Texas has yet to translate into political strength that would address their concerns. The state has a problem with low voter turnout in general, but this problem is especially pronounced in poor neighborhoods of color.

Promising practice: Houston's chambers of commerce promote collaboration

The Greater Houston Partnership aims to build regional economic prosperity and, in doing so, has formed the Common Ground Initiative to promote collaboration across the region's diverse chambers. This initiative focuses on uniting communities through an economic values frame, specifically asking how business projects might benefit the region's diverse communities and consequently the region's economic success.

The expansion of the Panama Canal, for instance, is a project that will have great implications for the Houston metropolitan area, given that the Port of Houston and the Houston region are on track to benefit

from the increase in trade cargo that will flow from Asia and South America once the canal expands capacity.²⁹ The maritime industry, however, does not have representative numbers of workers of color who are licensed, trained, and certified to fill its positions.

The initiative understood the need to engage the region's youth of color with such economic opportunities, and focused on introducing training programs in Jenkins High School, Houston Community College, and Texas Southern University, among other institutions, to specifically target opportunities to the African American community—one of the least represented communities in the industry.

While Hispanics constitute a significant percentage of the state's eligible voting population—25 percent—their turnout rates lag considerably compared to other states with large Hispanic populations. In 2008, 54 percent turned out in New Mexico and 57 percent turned out in California, while only 38 percent turned out in Texas—far below the then-national average of 50 percent. While reliable turnout data by racial and ethnic groups for the 2012 election has not yet been released, preliminary analysis demonstrates that demographic growth in this community across the country led to more Hispanics voting than ever before in the 2012 election—yet their turnout rate continues to lag behind the general public by a substantial margin.³⁰

In addition, there are voter suppression efforts underway that would disproportionately affect the state's residents of color.

In May 2011 Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) signed a voter ID bill into law that threatened to disenfranchise Hispanics at a greater rate than white citizens. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, even by the most conservative estimates, the percentage of Latino voters without an ID in Texas exceeds the percentage of white voters without an ID.³¹ Fortunately, in March 2012, the Department of Justice announced that it would not pre-clear the Texas voter ID law because Texas failed to prove that the law would not have a discriminatory effect on minority voters.³²

In addition to these suppressive voter ID efforts, convening participants were also concerned about redistricting efforts that would dilute the voting strength of communities of color. The huge growth in Texas's population over the last decade is largely attributable to its rapidly growing communities of color, who accounted for 89 percent of the state's population growth.³³ Largely as a result of this growth, Texas was allotted four more House seats.³⁴ A redistricting battle over how to apportion those seats, however, has raged for the last several months. A panel of federal judges recently threw out the state's redistricting plans because they appeared to undermine the political clout of the state's residents of color.³⁵

What can be done: Develop a civic engagement infrastructure

While these recent federal interventions have protected the voting power of Texas's residents of color for the time being, at the time of the roundtable, participants remained concerned. A participant from the Texas Latino Redistricting Task Force argued that all of these suppressive efforts should be understood as part of a larger strategy to prevent the growing Latino population from demonstrating political power, and to thwart the implementation of progressive policy at local and national levels.

One of the efforts that has been successful at encouraging Houston residents to engage in their communities is the Immigration and Citizenship Initiative. Over the last five years, record numbers of Houston residents have benefited from the service delivery model that educates residents about the citizenship process and other issues that affect the immigrant community. (see box)

Several convening participants also emphasized the need for greater civic engagement beyond voting by focusing on the development of a civic engagement infrastructure in the Houston region. In addition to electing candidates who support communities of color, participants agreed that community members should develop a system of ongoing dialogue and effective advocacy around public policy issues. A member of the Houston-Galveston Area Council noted that the community members who were most "vigorous" in contacting elected officials were generally elderly non-Hispanic white members of the community.

Roundtable participant Niiobli Armah also reflected on the fact that the Houston metro area is a pro-business region, which translates into the disproportionate presence of individuals from the corporate sector on nonprofit

Best practice: Citizenship education

Beginning in 2006, Neighborhood Centers Inc.; the City of Houston's Office of International Communities, formerly known as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; and the NALEO Educational Fund united to develop the Citizenship and Immigration Forums—a one-of-a-kind service delivery model that provides free, quality immigration assistance to underserved communities.

An estimated 300,000 individuals are eligible for naturalization in Harris County.³⁶ While many have the capacity to embark on this complex journey through their own resources, greater numbers find they need support from multiple sources in order to successfully complete the process. The forums were founded in response to this problem and are intended to deliver qualified and consistent immigration services in one location, including:

- Assistance with N-400 applications and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, applications

- Legal consultation opportunities

- Educational panels on the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship

2012 marked a record year for the Citizenship and Immigration Forum Initiative. More than 11,000 Houston residents attended forums, received legal consultations, and were assisted with Deferred Action applications. More than 700 clients received individual assistance with the naturalization application, and a core component of the program included education on the naturalization process and other topics relevant to the immigrant community. Furthermore, Neighborhood Centers' Immigration team assisted more than 5,400 DREAMers, and of those, about 380 Deferred Action applications were completed. Another 4,800 DREAMers received legal guidance from volunteer immigration attorneys and/or information on the Deferred Action program, bringing them one step closer to fulfilling their dream of becoming a U.S. citizen and a full stakeholder in their community.

boards and filling executive-level positions. While the region is rich in nonprofit organizations and resources, this has not translated into effective grassroots, movement-building work.

Increasing training opportunities for nonprofit leaders, elected officials, and leaders of postsecondary educational institutions could advance the development of a civic engagement infrastructure in the region. Such an infrastructure could be supported and strengthened by also encouraging collaborative efforts between advocates, nonprofits, business, policymakers, and the public sector, who are committed to improving civic engagement efforts in the region.

Conclusion

The Greater Houston Area continues to demonstrate incredible economic strength during the economic recovery following the Great Recession. But while the region has also become one of the most diverse metro regions across the nation, its growing communities of color have not equally shared in the region's economic recovery.

Participants at this roundtable were particularly worried about these economic disparities and argued that increasing diversity does not necessarily translate into increased integration. If diversity remains invisible, they argue, then institutions will not have any incentive to invest in the communities that will be the region's future leaders, workers, consumers, and voters. The business sector and foundations must better engage with the communities that help them prosper.

Amid this segregation and disconnectedness, however, are rays of hope—successful initiatives that focus on connecting the region's youth with its elderly and homeless; partnerships that work in collaboration across communities to ensure that everyone is prepared to take advantage of the region's most promising business projects; and programs that help residents become engaged citizens and full stakeholders in their community. Local innovations like these should be held up as models for the rest of our nation as we prepare to make similar demographic shifts, so we can similarly take full advantage of the opportunities and benefits of diversity.

About the author

Julie Ajinkya is a Policy Analyst for Progress 2050 at the Center for American Progress. Her work focuses on race, ethnicity, gender, and immigration politics, and she pays particular attention to the changing demographics of multicultural societies such as the United States and Western Europe. She is currently also a visiting professor of race politics and public policy at Cornell's center in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining American Progress, she was an instructor and teaching assistant at Cornell University while earning her doctorate in political science. Her past work has also focused on researching global and local women's movements and the gendered impacts of international financial institution investments in the developing world. She was a New Voices Fellow from 2003 to 2005 at the Institute for Policy Studies, where she coordinated the national outreach for the institute's Foreign Policy in Focus project. Julie earned her master's degree and doctorate in government from Cornell University, where her doctoral dissertation examined the political behavior of children of Muslim immigrants and their campaigns for gender-justice activism in Europe and North America. She also earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Amherst College.

Acknowledgements

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List of participants

| Name | Organization |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Amanda Timm | LISC |
| Angela Blanchard | Neighborhood Centers, Inc. |
| Antoine Bryant | The Bryant Design Group |
| Bala Balachandran | City of Houston, Planning and Development Department |
| Chris Bilton | Houston Minority Business Enterprise Center |
| Chuck Franklin | Texas State Senate |
| Claudia Munoz | Restaurant Opportunities Center of Houston (ROC-Houston) |
| Claudia Vasquez | Neighborhood Centers, Inc. |
| Damon Williams | Damon Williams Consulting |
| Dennis Coleman | Equality Texas |
| Domingo Garcia | Texas Latino Redistricting Task Force |
| Eric Lyons | Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce |
| Jeff Taebel | Houston-Galveston Area Council |
| Jennifer Touchet | Rebuilding Together |
| Kelli King-Jackson | Children's Defense Fund-Texas |
| Leticia Ramirez | Rebuilding Together |
| Mark Thiele | Houston Housing Authority |
| Monique Ward | METRO |
| Niiobli Armah | Center for Health Equity & Evaluation Research, MD Anderson |
| Pat Griffin | Women's Business Enterprise Alliance |
| Renee Cross | Hobby Center for Public Policy, University of Houston |
| Sheri Foreman | Houston READ Commission |
| Sheri Smith | Urban Planning and Environmental Policy, Texas Southern University |
| Stephen Klineberg | Kinder Institute |
| Steve Murdock | Hobby Center for Public Policy, University of Houston |
| Terence O'Neil | Department of Neighborhoods, City of Houston |
| Teri Burke | ACLU Texas |
| Terry Stringer | American Association of Blacks in Energy |
| Todd Jackson | Tri-County Black Chamber of Commerce |

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