

# **Economic Growth** AND **Integration** IN THE **Pacific Northwest**



## **Portland's Hispanic and Business Communities**

# ***Economic Growth and Integration in the Pacific Northwest: Portland's Hispanic and Business Communities***

SUPPORTED BY THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

This working paper provides a general background on the Hispanic community in Portland, Oregon—one of the country's new gateway cities for new immigrants. It documents how businesses, community organizations and the local government are working both to promote the socioeconomic integration of Latinos—and immigrants overall—and to maximize their overall contributions to the Portland metropolitan area. At this time of increased national attention to the rights of immigrants and local legislation that casts an unwelcoming environment—most recently copycat laws of Arizona's SB 1070 in Alabama (HB 56) and Georgia (HB 87)—the Portland area is an example of immigrants' contributions and of how positive, community-wide efforts can create an atmosphere that fosters immigrants' socioeconomic contributions.

"Despite the unique advantages of nature—climate, soil and an abundance of water -- that allow Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry to thrive, none contribute to the industry's success more than the dedication of a highly skilled Latino workforce, without which the industry could not survive."

-John Aguirre, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries, March 2010.

The findings presented here follow a roundtable meeting in Portland, Oregon, where Americas Society (AS), leveraging the relationship with its affiliate organization Council of the Americas (COA), convened local and national business executives, community leaders, public officials, and others to share concrete experiences of how to promote Hispanic workforce development and integration. A draft of this paper was presented at that meeting. While our research is comprehensive, it does not claim to document all initiatives throughout the metropolitan area—our primary focus has been on the work of business and the larger community groups.

This is the final working paper in a three-part series focusing on new gateway cities. In fall 2009, Americas Society released *Economic Opportunity and Integration: Nashville's Hispanic and Business Communities*, and in spring 2010, *Integration, Competitiveness and Prosperity in the Heartland: Omaha's Hispanic and Business Communities* was released. Through these working papers, AS aims to promote greater business attention to how integration programs are beneficial to both business and the community and demonstrate the social and economic contributions of Hispanic immigrants. We thank the National Business Council of this project for their continued support, and in the case of Omaha, our two local partners: Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber and the Oregon Association of Nurseries.

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## **AMERICAS SOCIETY AND COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS**

Together, Americas Society and Council of the Americas unite opinion leaders to exchange ideas and create solutions to the challenges of the Americas today.

The Americas Society (AS), the recipient of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to produce this working paper, is the premier forum dedicated to education, debate and dialogue in the Americas. Its mission is to foster an understanding of the contemporary political, social and economic issues confronting Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada, and to increase public awareness and appreciation of the diverse cultural heritage of the Americas and the importance of the inter-American relationship.<sup>1</sup>

The Council of the Americas (COA), affiliate organization to AS, is the premier international business organization whose members share a common commitment to economic and social development, open markets, the rule of law, and democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Council's membership consists of leading international companies representing a broad spectrum of sectors including banking and finance, consulting services, consumer products, energy and mining, manufacturing, media, technology, and transportation.<sup>2</sup>

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For further information about AS and COA, please write the AS/COA at 680 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10065 or visit AS/COA Online at [www.as-coa.org](http://www.as-coa.org).

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<sup>1</sup> The Americas Society is a tax-exempt public charity described in 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

<sup>2</sup> The Council of the Americas is a tax-exempt business league under 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and as such, actively pursues lobbying activities to advance its purpose and the interests of its members.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Portland and the Willamette Valley is an example of the nationwide growth of the Latino population and its dispersal to new gateway cities. In 2010, Portland's Latino population was estimated at 54,840, accounting for 9.4 percent of the city's total population. In the Portland metropolitan area, Latinos make up 10.9 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup> In some of Portland's suburban communities, such as Hillsboro, the total population growth for Latinos alone increased as much as 80 percent between 1990 and 2005. In communities such as Cornelius and Woodburn, Latinos make up more than half of the population, and in Salem, they represented 17.9 percent of the population in 2008.<sup>2</sup> Statewide, Latinos have grown from 4 percent to 11 percent of the state's population since 1990.

At the same time, Oregon's foreign-born population grew 108 percent between 1990 and 2000, and by 2008 it was estimated at 366,405.<sup>3</sup> Portland itself experienced a growth of 136 percent in its foreign-born population between 1990 and 2000, and by 2008, 13.1 percent of its population was foreign born. In the Portland metropolitan area, 13.9 percent was reported to be foreign born in 2008—above the 12.5 percent nationwide average.

Economic growth in the Northwest and the decline in employment opportunities for immigrants in other parts of the country help to explain the surge in the Portland area's foreign population. Oregon has also been a primary site for refugee resettlement since

"Most forward-thinking businesses recognize the importance of the Hispanic community in our state."

*-Brent Warren, VP and Community Development Officer, Banner Bank, March 2010. Exclusive Americas Society interview.*

the 1980s, and as a result, has highly developed social service and political networks to assist newcomers. In addition to Portland's reputation as one of the U.S. cities offering the highest quality of life, job availability for immigrants has also helped to attract new immigrants to Portland and nearby communities. This population is recognized as an engine of economic growth and has been welcomed by a network of social service providers,

philanthropists and business leaders. However, Latino immigrants have also faced negative reactions from certain groups in response to fast changes in the demographics of their communities.

As documented by the Migration Policy Institute's "Building the New American Community Initiative" report of 2004 and by the University of Oregon Scholars report "Understanding the Immigrant Experience in Oregon: Research, Analysis, and Recommendations" of 2008, immigrants in Oregon are at a disadvantage due to language barriers, limited access to language instruction, vocational training and youth development, and access to health services as well as unsafe conditions and lack of protection at the workplace. This creates impediments to advancement in the workplace and community.

As part of its nationwide integration efforts, Americas Society has documented how businesses, community organizations and local government are working to facilitate the socioeconomic integration of Latinos and immigrants overall in Portland and why integration programs benefit both employers and the larger community. Since 2007,

through primary and secondary research and in-person local meetings, Americas Society has worked in new gateway cities like Portland to support the further integration of immigrant workers into businesses and local communities and to give a greater voice to a more mobilized and visible business sector on issues of immigrant integration. At this time of critical debate on immigration legislation and the backlash against immigrants, AS believes that greater integration and appreciation for immigrants' contributions to society is fundamental for advancing forward with more balanced discussions at the local and national levels.

Funding for this work is provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, and all city-specific work is done with local partners. Our new gateway city work also has focused on New Orleans, LA, Atlanta, GA, Nashville, TN, and Omaha, NE.

## **BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES**

The *AS/COA Hispanic Integration Initiative* has identified examples of corporations in key sectors of the U.S. economy that promote the integration of the Hispanic population. This working paper highlights examples from the Portland area. Best practices are catalogued by type of activity:

### **● IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND ENCOURAGING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Companies such as Gunderson LLC, have provided English-language training at the workplace and off-site to foster a better work environment, reduce social tensions,

"We know that the Hispanic population is growing tremendously, and we aren't keeping up with the rate at colleges and universities, and that's not good for our economy and that's not good for our communities".

*-Agnes Hoffman, associate vice provost at PSU (quoted in "Oregon Education Panel Proposes In-State Tuition for Illegal Aliens", Associated Press, December 7, 2007).*

improve the quality of their services, and increase worker productivity. Columbia Sportswear Company has supported education through the Hispanic Chamber's scholarship fund. Intel has also sponsored programs to attract underrepresented minorities to the fields of technology, science and mathematics. Noteworthy examples of other companies in the United States that promote language training for

employees are Tecta America Corporation, Western Union, Norsan Group, Chick-Fil-A, Shaw Industries, Hospital Corporation of America, Bank of America, and Gaylord Entertainment.

### **● FOSTERING JOB RETENTION, CAREER TRACKS AND HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTH MEASURES**

Job training, leadership development and skills development provide Hispanics with increased opportunities to gain access to better jobs and wages. Simnitt Nursery along

with community groups and organizations serving the Latino community such as the Latino Network, Hacienda CDC, and PCUN focus on providing tools for professional development and capacity building. Georgia Power, Manpower, Intercontinental Hotels Group, Nissan North America, Inc., Dollar General, Wells Fargo, Cox, ConAgra Foods, State Farm Insurance, and Western Union are among the U.S. companies focused on developing the life and work skills of Hispanic workers.

Through Spanish-language training, bilingual health care materials and information campaigns directed specifically to Hispanics, Providence St. Vincent, Tuality Healthcare's ¡Salud! program and a number of hospitals and clinics in Portland are addressing health care access limitations faced by the Hispanic community. Employers such as Evergreen Nursery support employees by providing on-site translators to explain details of their health care plans. Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon educates workers on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and gain access to health care through radio, TV and print media. It also employs *consejeros Latinos*, who function as a Spanish-language concierge service, to help customers navigate the health care system through a toll-free number. At the national level, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer make efforts to reach out to Hispanic customers, along with Ochsner Health Systems in New Orleans and Hospital Corporation of America in Nashville. Local media are also key partners in many new gateway cities to provide information in Spanish about health, employment and other relevant issues.

### ● INCREASING INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY FINANCIAL STABILITY: FINANCIAL LITERACY AND HOME OWNERSHIP

Umpqua Bank, Wells Fargo and U.S. Bank are among some of the financial institutions working to improve Hispanics' financial access in Oregon through financial literacy and

"It is imperative for real estate and lending firms to reach out to Latinos especially in housing where there is large gap in the percentage of homeownership with Latino households at 37 percent vs. White households at 59 percent."

*-Bertha Ferrán, Branch Manager and Mortgage Consultant, Windermere Mortgage Services, July 2009. Exclusive Americas Society interview.*

homeownership courses imparted through partner organizations such as Hacienda CDC, Latino Network and the Hispanic Chamber as well as Portland's public school system. Windermere Mortgage Services and volunteer groups such as the Latino Home Initiative partner with the Portland Development Commission to educate the community on issues of homeownership and lending while also offering assistance with down payments. Through initiatives to facilitate access to banking services, credit, mortgages and loans, and bilingual banking materials, they provide

Latinos with increased opportunities for economic and social integration. Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citizens Home Loan, Inc., Wells Fargo, and Western Union are examples of companies involved in these efforts at the national level.

### ● STRENGTHENING LATINO LEADERSHIP: CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Information about citizenship and voting rights encourages Hispanics' political participation, promotes civic values and reinforces immigrants' desire and commitment to

root themselves in the fabric of their community. In addition to a large network of community-based groups such as CAUSA, Latino Network, Oregon Latino Agenda for Action, and initiatives such as the Commission on Hispanic Affairs and the Portland Plan, business coalitions such as the Oregon Essential Worker Coalition and The Coalition for a Working Oregon have been formed in Oregon to address these issues. *El Hispanic News*, Radio La Pantera and Univision Portland are three main local media outlets that participate in initiatives to support and inform the Hispanic community. Nationally, V-Me TV, Telemundo, mun2, and Univision work on initiatives related to Latino civic participation.

## I. Introduction

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has been defined by the contributions of different ethnic groups to building culturally diverse communities and enriching American society through complementary abilities. The integration of immigrants, defined as their full participation in and commitment to the host society and their exercise of corresponding rights and obligations, can be measured by their socioeconomic and political participation, upward mobility and ability to communicate in English. However, integration is not an automatic process; it is developed through generations and shaped by many factors including the characteristics of the immigrants as well as the contexts of the communities where they settle.

“Equity and integration in the Hispanic community are key to making prosperity accessible for all Portlanders.”

*-Portland Mayor Sam Adams, March 2010.*

Civil society has historically played a key role in immigrant integration in the absence of a formal federal policy and has helped native populations (including ethnic groups from previous waves of immigration) understand and accept new immigrants by creating spaces for positive interaction. As part of a two-way process, immigrants must take the initiative to integrate, as most want to, but they should also be afforded feasible ways to do so. The private sector can work independently and in collaboration with community groups and government to facilitate greater and more rapid integration, which ultimately benefits both business and the larger community.

The Americas Society believes that the public and private sectors play an important role in integration, which is necessary for both community cohesion and for worker

“We accomplish our mission through teamwork with our employees in an environment of fairness, respect, loyalty, and mutual success.”

*-Gary Furr, Chief Operations Officer, J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co., March 2010. Exclusive Americas Society interview.*

development. Integration of the U.S. Hispanic population is a reality that will remain regardless of the political debate over immigration reform. AS recognizes the key role that businesses and employers play in promoting cohesion and integration among the Latino workforce. Most immigrants spend a great portion of their time at the workplace and this is one of the main arenas where they

interact with other native or immigrant groups, use English, and have the opportunity to learn and take advantage of potential opportunities for upward mobility. Successful integration at the workplace benefits immigrants, fellow workers, employers, communities, and the overall economy and society.

Americas Society’s Rockefeller-funded Hispanic integration work draws attention to the practices developed by a number of businesses across the country to promote the integration of the Latino workforce and consumer base. These initiatives exemplify how the public and private sectors can address the challenge of integration, both by aiding immigrants in adapting to their new context and by facilitating the native population’s adjustment to interacting with multiethnic and culturally diverse groups. In the end, greater integration allows newcomers to further contribute to local competitiveness, creating jobs across a community.

## II. Portland: A Gateway for Hispanic Immigrants<sup>4</sup>

Migration to Oregon from Latin America, particularly from Mexico, traces back to the mid-nineteenth century, but about 70 percent to 80 percent of Latino immigrants currently living in the state arrived in the mid-1990s. According to a report by University of Oregon Scholars,

"The demographics are clear. Latinos are part of the fabric of this community, and they're here to stay. But there seemed to be a void. A lot of people felt that we needed a statewide voice."

-Consuelo Saragoza, senior adviser of public health for Multnomah County and a convener of the Latino Agenda for Action, quoted by Gosia Wozniacka in "Oregon Latinos Seek Power in Numbers", The Oregonian, November 5, 2009.

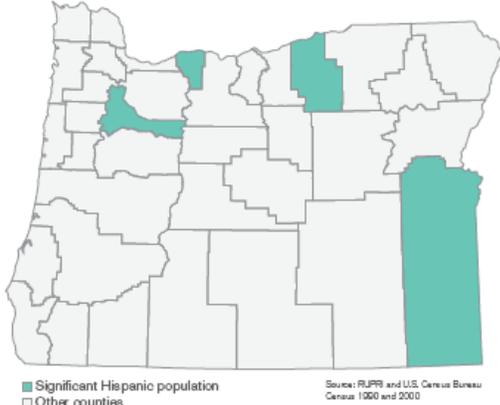
"between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population doubled in 21 of Oregon's 36 counties, signaling more dispersed settlement into suburban and rural areas."<sup>5</sup> The Latino population grew as much as 80 percent in some of Portland's suburban areas between 1990 and 2005. By 2010, according to

the US Census, Latinos represented 11.7 percent of the state's total population of 3.8 million. Of Oregon's total immigrant population in 2008, 39.5 percent were born in Mexico.<sup>6</sup> In the Portland metropolitan area, Latinos are the largest foreign-born group at 38.2 percent and Mexicans represent the majority of this group,<sup>7</sup> which has helped lead to a significant growth of Latino-owned food stores, retail stores and other businesses.

Recent waves of Mexican immigrants have settled in the Willamette Valley, along the Oregon coast, in the Rogue Valley, in the Columbia River Basin, and in the Snake River Valley. Their migration patterns have been influenced by the growth of new employment opportunities in urban areas, particularly in service, transportation, construction, and production industries but many of them still work in traditional agricultural tasks in nurseries and canneries in rural suburbs of Portland and across the Willamette Valley.<sup>8</sup>

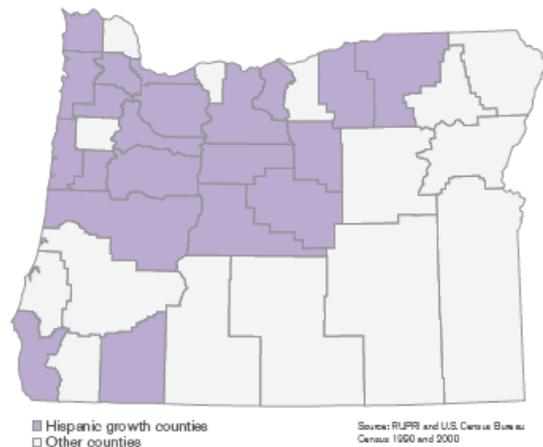
### Counties with significant Hispanic population

Counties in which the Hispanic population accounted for 20 percent or more of total population in 2004.



### Hispanic growth counties

Counties in which the Hispanic population more than doubled between 1990 and 2000.



Between the 1980s and the mid-1990s, the Mexican immigrant population in Oregon changed from seasonal migration to permanent migration of families settling in Salem, Woodburn, East Portland, Gresham, Medford, and other areas.<sup>9</sup> Many also moved to

jobs in the developing high-tech manufacturing, bio-tech industries, heavy equipment manufacturing, and health care services as these industries faced shortages of workers in the early 1990s. By 2005, most Latino workers were employed in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and the service sector.

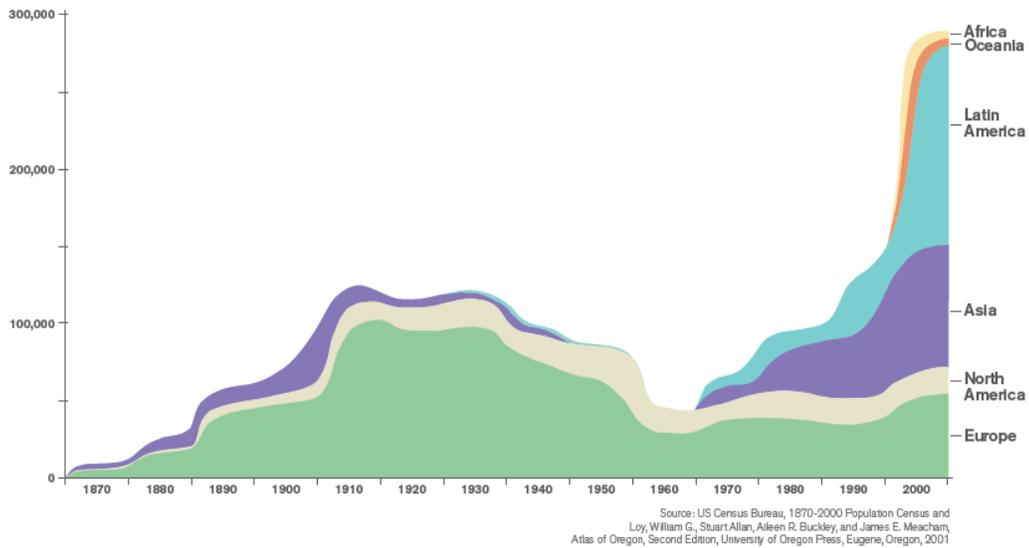
A distinctive characteristic of Latino immigration to Oregon is the high number of indigenous migrants, particularly from Mexico and Guatemala, concentrated primarily in agriculture. More than 14 indigenous groups live in Oregon, particularly in rural communities. Given their distinctive languages and customs, they require focused outreach and specific assistance.

“The more diverse our communities are, the richer we all are. They [immigrants] provide a workforce for a variety of jobs, but they’re also consumers. They’re eating at restaurants, they’re shopping at stores, they’re paying rent, they earn money, and they spend money.

-Janet Rash, NW Regional Community Engagement Manager, Intel, March 2010. Exclusive Americas Society interview.

The Latino population in Oregon is expected to grow over the next few years with Latino births representing 20 percent of the state’s total births in 2005. By 2020, 28 percent of students in public schools are expected to be Latino.<sup>10</sup> These patterns highlight the importance of supporting the integration of first-generation immigrants and their children.

Immigration to Oregon by place of origin, 1870–2000



### III. Challenges and Opportunities for Integration in Portland

Similar to trends at the national level, Latinos in Portland show positive signs of integration, particularly by the second and third generations, in terms of language acquisition, education, homeownership, and civic participation. Hispanics' strong work ethic, cultural and ethnic solidarity, high levels of community involvement, and the support from community and immigrant advocacy groups are key to this process. However, newcomers still face barriers such as high poverty levels, discrimination, insufficient skill acquisition opportunities, limited health care access, low education levels, high dropout rates, and low naturalization rates.

"As we continue to face economic threats and compete in a global economy, our nation must be ready for a period of constructive engagement on the issue of how best to integrate immigrant families into U.S. society and its workforce."

-Melanie Davis Managing Partner, El Hispanic News, March 2010.

#### Employment and Income

Immigrants play a key role in Oregon's economy, representing 11.3 percent of the state's labor force, up from 5.4 percent in 1990. In 2007, the majority (24.1 percent) of the foreign-born population 16 and older in Oregon worked in service occupations; 23.7 percent in management, professional, and related occupations; and 18.8 percent in production, transportation and material moving occupations.<sup>11</sup> Of an estimated 100,000 farm workers statewide, 98 percent are Latino, primarily of Mexican origin. Often these jobs offer few opportunities for upward mobility due to low wages and limited skill acquisition opportunities. Housing facilities are sometimes inadequate, overcrowded, poorly located, and unsafe with many farm workers still living in makeshift homes near the fields, isolated from the community and family.

In 2007, 47.4 percent of foreign-born workers in Oregon earned less than \$25,000 a year and 18.8 percent earned \$50,000 or more. An estimated 17.3 percent of Oregon's immigrant population lived below the poverty threshold, compared with 20.0 percent in 2000 and 22.1 percent in 1990. An estimated 21.6 percent of persons who spoke Spanish at home lived in poverty.<sup>12</sup> The poverty rate for Latinos in Oregon is 37.1 percent (compared to 13.6 percent for non-Latino whites).<sup>13</sup>

Latino households with incomes greater than \$100,000 a year grew more than five times since 1990, and those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$99,999 grew by 359 percent between 1990 and 2000.<sup>14</sup> By the end of the 1990s there were approximately 6,000 Latino-owned businesses and by 2002 they owned 2.1 percent of Oregon firms.<sup>15</sup>

"Stable housing is the departing point from which residents can build their productive lives and become integral parts of our society and economy."

-Pietro Ferrari, Executive Director, Hacienda Community Development Corporation (CDC), November 2009.

Positive signs of integration and upward mobility are especially evident among second- and third-generation immigrants. According to the Oregon Department of Employment, the overall trend from 1990 to 2005 in the occupational employment profile of the state's Mexicans has shifted from agriculture toward other industries and occupations, including service-related

occupations, health care construction, light manufacturing, and material moving and handling.

### **Education and English language proficiency**

The majority of immigrants from Mexico and Central America come to the United States with low levels of education, which usually translates into low-income levels and high poverty rates. Among Oregon's foreign-born population in 2007, 75.2 percent of those who spoke Spanish at home demonstrated limited English proficiency.<sup>16</sup>

Access to language training is key to children's success in schools and parents' advancement in the workplace and community.

The Dream Act "simply means allowing Oregon's children to attend Oregon's schools."

#

*-Dave Hunt, Oregon Speaker of the House, at Americas Society program titled "Regional Competitiveness and Latino Integration: Developing our Workforce," March 2010.*

According to the Migration Policy Institute, Oregon's foreign-born population with limited English proficiency increased by 30.9 percent between 2000 and 2007. In 2007, 53.6 percent of immigrants did not speak English proficiently.<sup>17</sup>

Although this rate improves by the second and third generations, first-generation immigrants and their children face disadvantages as a result. The University of Oregon Scholars' report explains that

Latino youth in Oregon face special challenges in the school environment, where their dropout rates are relatively high, and schools have sometimes been slow to develop culturally sensitive assistance and intervention programs.

### **Health**

Due to their type of employment, cultural barriers and immigration status, Latinos are less likely than other immigrant groups in Oregon to have health insurance and receive preventative care. A large number do not receive proper care due to lack of information, fear of job loss or lack of insurance coverage. Distance poses another problem as available public transportation is often not ideal and clinics may not be easily accessible, especially for rural farm workers. Cultural and language barriers can still be a problem even if clinics offer bilingual care, especially for indigenous migrants.

"Our strategy, which seeks to help everyone get access to health care, brings the added benefit of winning business with employers that have a significant Latino population."

*-Francisco Garbayo, Emerging Markets, Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, March 2010.*

### **Civic Participation**

In comparison to the national average, Oregon has low naturalization rates. In 2008, only 36.1 percent of the foreign-born in Oregon were citizens compared to 43 percent for the foreign-born population nationally.<sup>18</sup> Since the mid-twentieth century, and particularly since the 1980s, community-based organizations have been an active voice in promoting Latinos' civic engagement. At the same time, Latino employment in the public sector has grown significantly, from 3 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2002, and in 2005, Paul De Muniz was elected as the first Latino Chief of Justice in the Oregon Supreme Court.<sup>19</sup>

The Oregon Essential Worker Immigration Coalition, the Coalition for Working Oregon, and the Oregon Latino Agenda for Action (OLAA) are among the groups bringing Latinos

together. In October 2010, OLAA brought together 170 representatives from across the state for a two-day summit that prioritized action steps to foster the health, education and the economic well-being of Oregon's Latino population and the state's immigrants. A legislative proposal to offer in-state tuition to Oregon's undocumented immigrants, the Portland City Council's statement in support of the Dream Act and Portland's funding for day labor worker centers are some of the results. But an anti-immigrant climate has also led to the tightening of rules for undocumented immigrants.

## IV. Integration in Portland: Best Practices and Challenges

In response to the growth of the Latino population and the gap between available services and community needs, a number of non-profit groups (migrant and non-migrant based), unions, government offices, religious organizations, and businesses have developed a network of support and community organization.

Through site visits in Portland, in-depth interviews and a half-day roundtable meeting with business leaders, community organizations and the public sector, Americas Society identified a strong sense of commitment to broadening and deepening existing integration programs. The private and public sectors and community groups recognize the need to implement processes that ensure concrete steps and action plans that promote integration; dialogue is a frequent occurrence in the city but committing to next steps is more of a challenge.

“The fact that our Latino/Hispanic population is growing is fundamentally good for Portland; it makes us a stronger city.”

*--Portland Mayor Sam Adams, March 2010. Exclusive Americas Society interview.*

To move forward, partnerships across sectors should be emphasized that focus on in-kind support and training rather than provision of financial resources. This is especially true at a time of shrinking budgets across the board. In fact, the limited financial resources currently available open the door to establish new types of collaboration where human capital is a focal point of partnerships and where corporate professional groups can offer youth and adults training on workplace skills.

Stronger alliances and coordination between Latino-focused organizations will help to increase the community’s impact on policy development, and at the same time allow groups to move beyond their sometimes narrow operating environments. But these alliances also can be broadened to include groups that serve other minority populations.

Affordable housing is a top concern in Portland, and many of the area’s Latino and overall immigrant populations struggle to buy homes both due to the local market as well as a need for greater access to financial services. One solution is for financial literacy programs to be marketed more broadly to help educate Hispanics about banking services, while also providing instruction on how to buy a home and avoid bad credit and home foreclosure. Challenges include a fundamental lack of access on how to open accounts and a lack of state housing and economic development programs.

In an effort to document how businesses, local government and community organizations are working to promote the integration of Portland’s Latino—and overall immigrant—population, Americas Society interviewed leaders across sectors to document many of the best practices and remaining challenges. For employers, more effective integration increases worker loyalty, reduces employee turnover and absenteeism and boosts worker productivity and motivation, thereby increasing efficiency and competitiveness. Other benefits include strengthened social capital, greater opportunities for upward mobility and increased income, which is injected back into the economy. Select integration programs in Portland are described in the next section.

## **WORKFORCE AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING**

Increasing immigrants' access to education and skills development opportunities strengthens the position of workers and their families in the community and promotes participation, diminishing isolation and discrimination. At the same time, skills development provides beneficiaries with increased opportunities to perform well and to access better jobs and wages. For employers, as seen below, facilitating the development of their Hispanic and immigrant employees allows for in-house talent and know-how to be reinvested in the business. This approach spares employers recruiting costs, but also it helps workers stay motivated with a vision toward their future.

### **English- and Spanish-Language Training**

- Gunderson LLC, a railcar manufacturer, has offered opportunities for its workers to learn English in order to better perform their jobs and to increase on-the-job safety. At one point a welder training program was also established with the goal of building its workforce. For eight years a language specialist was on staff whose responsibilities also included building collaborations in the community.
- The Northwest Food Processors Association has organized sessions at the annual trade show of food manufacturers on Spanish-language supervisory instruction and how to generally prepare people for supervisory responsibilities.
- The Hispanic Chamber provides ESL as part of a program funded by the City of Portland, through the Portland Development Commission's Economic Opportunity Program (EOI), which serves low-income Latinos who are interested in starting a business and need ESL and other support.

### **Skills and Professional Development**

- The Latino Network's Youth Leadership Development and Skill Building programs provide cultural and educational workshops, weekly tutoring and mentoring support and sports programs to build social and leadership skills. The Proyecto Esperanza/Project Hope seeks to educate and empower women. The Juntos Aprendemos/Together We Learn program helps young children and their parents prepare for kindergarten. Since its beginning in 2000, Juntos Aprendemos has served over 550 families. The Parent Organizing Project trains and supports the parents to become more engaged in their children's day-to-day learning and advocate for their children's educational needs and desires.
- The Mexican Consulate has created partnerships with many community organizations to promote the Plazas Comunitarias. Hacienda CDC, for example, has partnered to provide education and financial literacy to the participants at the Micro-Mercantes Program through a Plaza Comunitaria.

## Scholarships and Adult Education

- To promote a workforce that reflects the diversity of the overall community, Intel sponsors pipeline programs that attract underrepresented minorities into the technology, science and mathematics fields. This outreach occurs from the K-12 level and into college. In 2008, a total of 2,700 students participated in the program. These programs and ones like it expose students to the subject fields relevant to working in high-skilled tech companies and give them the opportunity to connect with Intel employees as well as a chance to intern. Intel has also established a partnership with the Centro Cultural to invest in a computer lab.
- With its over 800 members, the Hispanic Chamber serves as a resource for the Hispanic business community. To provide support and encourage Hispanic students to continue their higher education, over the past 14 years, they have put together a generous annual scholarship program. As of May 2009, they had awarded \$981,000 in individual and corporate sponsored scholarships to 404 Latino students throughout Oregon. They also provide business development services such as business plans, software training and guidance with contracts and procurements and set up CEO roundtables to foster collaborations between their members and the larger business community.
- Columbia Sportswear Company provides funds to the Hispanic Chamber's scholarship fund. Other donors include Regence, Providence Health and Services, J Frank Schmidt & Son Nike, Wieden & Kennedy, FredMeyer, Altria, Enterprise, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, U.S. Bank, Pacific Power, Portland General Electric, Orcilia Forbes, Kaiser Permanente, Portland Trail Blazers, and Miller Nash, among others.
- The mission of Portland Community College (PCC) is to increase access to higher education for all. PCC has developed numerous programs targeting high school and college drop-outs as well as at-risk students. The college offers a Spanish-language GED program both on site and online and a College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). CAMP is a federally-funded program designed to support students from migrant and seasonal farm worker backgrounds during their first year in college. It provides students with both financial assistance and support services, with the goal of preparing them to continue their education at a four-year college or university. Beyond particular students, the program is very conscious of including families in their approach, getting families to understand that higher education is a possibility for their children's future. The college also partners with companies to give employees higher-skills training. When the employees stay on for more than 90 days, the company reimburses \$800 to the program. J Frank Schmidt & Son also partners with the college to provide workforce training. Employees of the nursery who complete the program become eligible for pay raises.
- Pacific University collaborates with the Forest Grove and Hillsboro school districts to provide students with greater access to post-secondary education.

## WORKFORCE AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT: HEALTH

Employers that facilitate access to preventative health information and health care increase the productivity of their workers and reduce the high costs associated with emergency room use. At the same time, the workplace and the community's overall quality of health is improved by encouraging smart lifestyle choices.

### Bilingual access to health care and social services

- Evergreen Nursery, with a labor force that is approximately 80 percent Hispanic, works with on-site translators to explain the benefits of its health care and 401K plans for workers. In addition, it works with the Farm Employers Labor Service, which sends representatives to the worksite to see if workers need assistance in communicating any problems to managers. Approximately 85 people work at Evergreen during peak time, and 50 to 60 employees work year round.
- Due to the growth of Latino and Spanish-speaking patients, Providence St. Vincent developed the “promotores” in conjunction with Catholic Charities. The joint effort pairs up patients with promotores who serve as cultural liaisons and advocates. Sixty volunteers with training in nutrition, exercise, confidentiality, and leadership work on the program and offer interpreter services by phone and in person.
- Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon has witnessed health barriers faced by the Latino population as a result of language and cultural challenges. They work to provide information on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and access health care through radio, TV and print media sources. It also employs *consejeros Latinos*, who function as a Spanish-language concierge service with a toll-free number to help customers navigate the health care system. Each *consejero* receives six weeks of training prior to starting the job. Their efforts have increased short-term health outcomes while also allowing BlueCross BlueShield to increase the number of new Latino members given their friendly perception in the community.
- J Frank Schmidt & Son has partnered with Bank of America, Wells Fargo and U.S. Bank to get basic financial literacy information to their employees, and it employs bilingual human resource employees who can help with topics ranging from health insurance to citizenship issues.

## II. FINANCIAL LITERACY: ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND HOUSING

Improving immigrants' financial literacy opens the door for access to banking services, credit, mortgages and loans. In the long term this allows them to support their children's college education, make investments or purchase a home—indicators of stability and a long-term commitment to both their communities and jobs. For

business, these programs help to improve communication with the community and are a useful tool to enlarge their customer base.

### **Financial Literacy Training Programs**

- Given the increase in Spanish-speaking clients, Windermere Real Estate has been increasing its number of Spanish-speaking real estate agents and Windermere Mortgage Services offers Spanish-language services. They also participate in Operation Home, an initiative of the Portland Development Commission that brings together developers, builders, lenders such as Windermere, and banks such as Wells Fargo and U.S. Bank to assess what the barriers to home ownership are in minority communities. In addition to Operation Home, the Portland Development Commission launched the magazine *Mi Primera Casa* (in Spanish) focusing on home ownership and addressing issues related to mortgages and lending.
- U.S. Bank reaches out to the Hispanic community through partnerships with organizations such as Hacienda, Latino Network, and the Hispanic Chamber to offer financial literacy courses and home ownership programs. Working with local school districts, the bank's financial literacy courses teach students the importance of saving and budgeting to reach their personal goals. English- and Spanish-language home ownership programs are offered in a series of classes that span several weeks to educate participants about financing options available to purchase a house as well as steps that can be taken to improve their personal credit history. U.S. Bank fosters relationships with the Hispanic community by participating in local events offered by groups such as the low-income Latina advocacy group, Adelente Mujeres. Education is a key component of the bank's charitable efforts with a scholarship program that matches contributions given by their customers of up to \$1,000.
- Wells Fargo has worked with high school and college students as well as Portland public schools to offer basic financial literacy classes, working with students within the 8-17 age group. With their HandsOnBanking program, a curriculum tailored to different ages from fourth grade to adults, Wells Fargo teaches everything from basic banking concepts to how to write a business plan and information on home ownership. Wells Fargo has established partnerships with the Portland public school system to instruct students on the basics of banking. They have also established "Amigos," an affinity group that provides opportunities for networking and career counseling.
- The Hispanic Chamber conducts financial literacy as part of the technical assistance services provided to Latino businesses. Eighty percent of the businesses they serve are owned by Hispanic immigrants.

### **Homeownership**

- Working to increase home ownership in the Latino Community, Umpqua Bank partners with Hacienda CDC in homeownership fairs as well as homeownership

classes. This initial investment means that clients are more prepared when taking out loans and investing in homes. They also partner with the Portland Housing Center in offering counseling and financial services to potential homebuyers.

- Hacienda CDC has 400 rental units in Portland serving 2,000 residents, of which 85 percent are Latino and 10 percent Somali. Families or individuals earning between 30 percent and 60 percent of median family income or with housing vouchers are eligible for these subsidized apartments. A key element of Hacienda's award-winning community development model is the integration of housing with economic opportunity, education and social welfare that address wide ranging disparities affecting disproportionately low-income immigrants, refugees and other disadvantaged communities.

Through Hacienda's microenterprise development program (Micro mercantes) many low-income Latina entrepreneurs have started successful home-based businesses, connected to mainstream markets and develop skills for self employment and life. Banks such as Wells Fargo, Bank of America, U.S. Bank, and Banner Bank have supported Hacienda CDC's programs.

- PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste) and other organizations joined forces in 1990 to establish the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC). Since 1992, FHDC has established five housing developments with more than 100 units in Woodburn and Salem. FHDC's mission is to offer affordable housing, bring the farm workers into the community and "strengthen families through education and economic development programs" that are offered at each of the housing development's community centers. Their services include youth leadership programs, English-language classes, citizenship courses, financial literacy, and training on workers' rights. Several foundations, community groups, churches, individuals, and businesses (including Bank of America, Sterling Bank, Wells Fargo, U.S. Bank, Safeco Insurance, and Wal-Mart), have funded FHDC's projects. School districts support the after-school and English- language curriculums.
- Latino Home Initiative: Abriendo Puertas is a volunteer organization of community leaders committed to increasing home ownership for Latinos and other minority groups through education and down payment assistance grants. Its members include representatives of the Portland Development Commission, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Portland Housing Center, ReMax Equity, and M2M Lending, LLC, among others. The Latino Home Initiative organizes an annual Latino Home buying fair drawing more than 500 attendees. Companies such as TriMet and Point West Credit Union sponsor it.
- The annual Latino Homebuyers Fair, organized by Hacienda CDC and the Portland Development Commission, provides information and resources on how to purchase and maintain a home. The 2009 fair drew over 1,000 participants and over 110 registered heads of households.

### III. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Providing information about naturalization and civic participation can encourage political participation, promote civic values and reinforce immigrants' desire and commitment to become proficient in English and root themselves in the fabric of communities.

- TriMet, the entity responsible for Portland's public transportation system, has developed all of its material in Spanish, including a comic strip titled "How to Travel" to teach passengers about the public transit system. It also offers an assistance line with Spanish-speaking operators and has a "planning your trip" service in Spanish, to help commuters find the best route to their destination. To distribute its information, TriMet works in partnership with Catholic Charities, Latino Network and Centro Cultural in addition to its extensive door-to-door outreach in neighborhoods with a high Latino population. TriMet recently partnered with Victory Outreach Community Services, Inc., a community-based Latino youth organization, in an effort to prevent gang activity among Latino youth. Eight Victory Outreach Advocates provide information to riders about TriMet customer services, safety and security, as well as providing a physical presence on the transit system to serve as a deterrent for inappropriate, intimidating and illegal conduct related to gang activity. These "rider advocates" work from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.
- The Oregon Essential Worker Immigration Coalition has brought together Oregon restaurants, nurseries and other businesses to fight proposals they see as hostile to immigrant workers. Through research and lobbying efforts, they work to add the voice of businesses to the debate.
- Founded in 1981, *El Hispanic News*, is the oldest Hispanic publication in the Pacific Northwest. Part of its mission is to support and inform the Hispanic community while assisting mainstream media outlets in reaching this community.
- The Coalition for a Working Oregon (CWO) is a nonprofit group of employers established in 2007 that favors immigration reform. Committed to ensuring that Oregon has access to a stable, legal immigrant workforce, the CWO recently commissioned a study that concluded that the loss of undocumented workers in the state would result in a loss of more than 170,000 jobs and a \$17.7 billion drop in production.<sup>20</sup> The CWO includes 20 Oregon employer associations representing more than 300,000 Oregon workers.
- The Hispanic Chamber provides the largest Latino Leadership Program in Oregon. They are currently completing Class IV with 22 participants from the public and private sectors, many of whom are immigrants.
- The Oregon Law Center's Indigenous Farmworker Project provides community education by visiting labor camps, offering workshops and radio announcements in Spanish and indigenous languages.

- Established in 1995, CAUSA, Oregon’s statewide grassroots immigrant rights coalition, works to defend and advance immigrant rights through coordination with local, state and national coalitions and allies. Its long-term programs focus on building immigrant leadership, increasing immigrant civic participation and awareness of legal and civil rights, expanding collaboration with immigrant-serving organizations, promoting public awareness of immigrants’ contributions, documenting abuses against immigrants and responding to legislation that affects immigrants’ rights. In 2005, CAUSA and its partner organizations defeated over 18 anti-immigrant/anti-worker bills in the Oregon State Legislature.
- The Oregon Latino Agenda for Action, formed in 2009, seeks to bring together community organizations and leaders in Oregon “to build recognition, set priorities and eventually start a research institute or similar entity to inform the public and legislators” about Hispanic issues and develop a legislative agenda. Their “salon” meetings have been supported by the Oregon Consensus Program at Portland State University.<sup>21</sup>
- The Commission on Hispanic Affairs was created by the 1983 Legislative Assembly to work for the implementation of economic, social, legal, and political equality for Hispanics in Oregon. The Commission researches problems and issues and recommends appropriate action, maintains a liaison between the Hispanic community and government entities, and encourages Hispanic representation on state boards and commissions.
- In the context of the Portland Plan, Mayor Sam Adams has invited Latino organizations to a series of meetings to participate in defining priorities for investment and development in Portland over the next 25 years.
- The Oregon Community Foundation’s Latino Partnership Program is working in four areas of Oregon outside Portland to strengthen non-profit organizations serving Latinos, Latino community leaders and “bridge building” between Latino and mainstream culture in Oregon. The program has significant experience with community-based ESL programs and programs that significantly increase Latino parent involvement in schools.
- The Latino Network’s Diversity and Civic Leadership Academy seeks to strengthen leadership and organizing skills. It also provides training for grassroots organizations. Concilio Somos el Futuro is a network of youth providers and advocates working in partnership with the Department of Community Justice to reduce overrepresentation of Latino youth in the justice system and develop a culturally specific system of care to support the successful reintegration of youth who are on probation.
- PCUN’s leadership development institute (CAPACES) teaches young members how to manage a foundation and other skills. Through its radio station (Radio Movimiento, La voz del pueblo) PCUN broadcasts useful information for the community including announcements in indigenous languages.

## V. Conclusions and Next Steps

The businesses and community groups mentioned here are facilitating the process of integration for Latinos and immigrants overall while creating a more welcoming environment for all newcomers to the Portland metropolitan area. As in other new gateway cities, they have recognized that the integration of immigrant workers increases business competitiveness through a better-trained, stable and loyal workforce that has the experience and training required to move up the professional ladder. Through these practices, employers also promote social cohesion in and outside the workplace and improve working conditions, all of which contribute to maximizing business productivity. At the same time, integration and non-restrictionist policies toward immigrants help to strengthen the local economy by reinforcing the potential of a powerful consumer and tax-paying base.

Yet, there is more to be done to increase community-wide buy-in of the importance of integration. This is especially crucial in Portland where leaders from across the community expressed a strong frustration with major multinational businesses relocating from the metropolitan area to other U.S. cities. Integration improves local talent and the skills of the labor force. This is partly what is needed to attract new investments to the area.

Participants in an AS/COA roundtable meeting in Portland agreed that integration is a two-way street, and in addition to working with Latinos and the overall immigrant population, the host community needs to be educated about the value of immigration. There is a need to promote messages that present the community in a positive light, reflecting the diversity of immigrant experiences, interests and intellect within the community, and breaking down stereotypes.

Local leaders also identified the importance of greater coordination among groups working to advance issues crucial to the Latino and overall Portland community. To begin, Portland-based organizations—public, private and nonprofit—should come together to formulate a plan that outlines the steps to be taken to improve financial literacy, workforce development, civic participation, and other areas. Steps taken by the Oregon Latino Agenda for Action are a positive development in this regard.

In Portland, the challenge is clear: the issue of immigrant integration is being addressed by a handful of people with the backing of city leadership but without the participation or buy-in of the community overall. At the same time, the private sector and nonprofit organizations often face a disconnect in formulating solutions to how they can work together. During these difficult economic times, the business community has less financial resources to support integration activities but it is ready and willing to offer in-kind donations, to share know-how and to offer mentorship through employee resource groups.

"I think that just an understanding of who we are in society means that we have a responsibility to integration, but secondly it's good business. Immigrants are hard workers, smart, [and] they are committed to their families."

*-Serena Cruz Walsh, Co-Owner, Cityhouse Builders, March 2010. Exclusive Americas Society interview.*

Beyond moving the issue of integration to a city-wide policy that involves private-sector executives, community leaders working with Americas Society identified three specific areas in which they can further collaborate to support Latino and Latino-immigrant integration: ongoing partnerships, English-language training and financial literacy programs that lead to greater access to housing.

Unlike other cities where Americas Society has worked, Portland stands out for the city's numerous forums for dialogue. That is why it is crucial that any partnerships and dialogues in Portland do not merely lead to further discussion but to action plans that seek to move the needle. If not, community leaders will soon tire of processes that do not produce results.

At the same time, employers and financial institutions should step-up efforts that teach the basics of finance. A greater effort should also be placed on teaching financial literacy at a younger age so that youth can learn how to save money. This could involve building on the partnerships that already exist between select financial institutions and local public schools.

For Americas Society, this working paper was intended to draw attention to the changing demographic and economic landscape of Portland, Oregon—a new gateway city in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. The efforts by businesses and community groups to promote integration—although room still exists for improvement—should serve as models for other new gateway cities.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA Metropolitan Statistical Area includes the following principal cities: Portland, OR; Vancouver, WA; Beaverton, OR; and Hillsboro, OR. The following counties are included: Clackamas County, OR; Columbia County, OR; Multnomah County, OR; Washington County, OR; Yamhill County, OR; Clark County, WA; and Skamania County, WA. Source: “American Fact Finder, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010”, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmmk>
- <sup>2</sup> Source: Susan Hardwick and James E. Meacham, “Placing’ the Refugee Diaspora in Suburban Portland, Oregon”, in Audrey Singer, Susan W. Hardwick and Caroline B. Brettell, eds. *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2008; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. p. 233.
- <sup>3</sup> “2008 American Community Survey 1-year estimates”, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?\\_bm=y&-context=adp&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_1YR\\_G00\\_&-tree\\_id=308&-redoLog=true&-caller=geoselect&-geo\\_id=04000US41&-format=&-lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-context=adp&-ds_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_&-tree_id=308&-redoLog=true&-caller=geoselect&-geo_id=04000US41&-format=&-lang=en)
- <sup>4</sup> Throughout this research, we have benefited from the advice and comments of a number of experts and scholars in the field, to whom we would like to express our gratitude. While not a comprehensive list, among them are Marcela Mendoza, Lynn Stephen, Min. Enrique Romero Cuevas, Ursula Rojas, Pietro Ferrari, Bertha Ferrán, Ramón Ramírez, and Edward Olivos. We would also like to thank our senior researcher, Alexandra Délano, for her work in preparing this document. Any errors in this background paper are the responsibility of the project leaders. Comments are welcome and can be sent to Jason Marczak, Director of Policy, Americas Society and Council of the Americas: [jmarczak@as-coa.org](mailto:jmarczak@as-coa.org).
- <sup>5</sup> “Understanding the Immigrant Experience in Oregon: Research, Analysis, and Recommendations from University of Oregon Scholars”, May 2008 (<http://www.uoregon.edu/~lerc/immreport.html>)
- <sup>6</sup> “2008 American Community Survey and Census Data on the Foreign Born by State”, MPI Data Hub, Migration Policy Institute, last viewed, February 28, 2010.
- <sup>7</sup> “2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates,” [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=31000US38900&-qr\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_3YR\\_G00\\_DP3YR5&-context=adp&-ds\\_name=&-tree\\_id=3308&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-format=](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=31000US38900&-qr_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_DP3YR5&-context=adp&-ds_name=&-tree_id=3308&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-format=)
- Building the New American Community Newcomer Integration and Inclusion Experiences in Non-Traditional Gateway Cities*, Migration Policy Institute, 2004, p. 14.
- <sup>8</sup> Marcela Mendoza, “New Migrations: Mexican Workers and their Families since the 1990s”, p. 139.
- <sup>9</sup> Lynn Stephen and Marcela Mendoza, “Latinos in Oregon”, in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Latino America: A State-by-State Encyclopedia*, 2008.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> “2008 American Community Survey and Census Data on the Foreign Born by State”, MPI Data Hub, Migration Policy Institute, last viewed, February 28, 2010.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> “Oregon: Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity, states (2007-2008), U.S. (2008)”, Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org) (available at: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?rgn=39&cat=1&ind=14>, last viewed March 8, 2010).
- <sup>14</sup> See Marcela Mendoza, “New Migrations: Mexican Workers and their Families since the 1990s”, p. 138.
- <sup>15</sup> Lynn Stephen and Marcela Mendoza, “Latinos in Oregon”, in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Latino America: A State-by-State Encyclopedia*, 2008.
- <sup>16</sup> “2008 American Community Survey and Census Data on the Foreign Born by State”, MPI Data Hub, Migration Policy Institute, last viewed, February 28, 2010.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Lynn Stephen and Marcela Mendoza, “Latinos in Oregon”, in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Latino America: A State-by-State Encyclopedia*, 2008.

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<sup>20</sup> “Loss of undocumented workers could cost Oregon \$17.7B”, *The Portland Business Journal*, July 9, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Gosia Wozniacka, “Oregon Latinos Seek Power in Numbers”, *The Oregonian*, November 5, 2009.