Creating Equity Through Leadership

The Latino Policy Forum has a long history of promoting policies that have a positive impact on Latinos and other minorities in metro Chicago. Over the past 8 years, the Forum has run a leadership academy training, more than 200 civic leaders representing about 90 organizations from across the state.

The Multicultural Leadership Academy (formerly the Latino Leadership Academy) was created to address a clear absence of Latino leadership. This sad reality was even more troubling because Latinos constitute the largest minority in Illinois – growing more than 40 percent since 2000.

Launched in 2009, the Academy set out to reduce the barriers faced by Latinos when they sought leadership opportunities. The idea was to dedicate resources and expertise to building the capacity of Latino organizations by training and empowering their leaders. A well-prepared staff would clearly build robust nonprofit agencies and strengthen their communities.

For six years, the Academy was successful in accomplishing its goal to create networks of well-trained Latino leaders who, today, still actively pursue policy issues affecting their constituents.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The Multicultural Leadership Academy equips Latino and African American leaders committed to social justice with tools to strengthen their communities, manage thriving organizations, and work in strategic alliance with one another and with other coalitions to achieve larger objectives.

GOAL

• To nurture a space where Latino and African American leaders can develop their skills and enhance their effectiveness as agents of social change
• To build bridges between Latinos and African Americans that promote opportunities for collaboration
• To leverage the collective power of Latino and African American leadership

CREATING EQUITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Latino Policy Forum 10th Anniversary

MULTICULTURAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

PHOTOS: OLGA LOPEZ
BUILDING POWER THROUGH DELIBERATE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

In 2015, the Forum revisited the Academy’s objectives and after consulting with many members of the community, recognized the need to broaden the scope of its mission and those it trained. Purpose, intent, and objectives were deliberately revised to include leaders from the African American community with the goal to leverage power and build sustainable relationships between communities of color, which often live and work in isolation of one another.

The revised Academy goals include:

• To increase cross-cultural understanding and collaboration among the participants to address pressing social issues

• To build networks of Latino and African American leaders to strengthen their organizations and communities.

Building trust is a fundamental element of any leadership program’s success. The Academy presents opportunities to create paradigm shifts that allow Latinos and African Americans to share concerns, collaborate, and generate mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Academy also creates a safe place to acknowledge inequalities, share common concerns, and celebrate cultural differences. Participants, who are sponsored by their employer-organizations, include all levels of internal management, board members, and volunteers. They engage in action-learning projects and collaborate on cross-cultural teams. Working together leads them to inspired partnerships for political, social justice, and community impact.

Since 2015, the Academy has provided training to more than 200 representatives from 92 organizations. Feedback from participants ranges from Good to Excellent 92 percent of the time.

Saeed Richardson, (MLA ’18) stated that, “work together … is necessary for significant, lasting change.”

ONWARD AND UPWARDS

The Forum will continue its deliberate purpose of bringing together leaders from African American and Latino communities to build trust, cultivate strategic alliances, and together work for justice.

SELECTED SUCCESS STORIES OF ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

• Receipt of Community Service award
• Promotion within agency to Executive Director position
• Receipt of large capital investment grant for community organization
• Improved community relations
• Strengthened advocacy and coalition building skills
• Named White House Champion of Change
• Countless partnerships
LATINO POLICY FORUM LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
Austin Coming Together
BBF Family Services
Big Shoulders Fund
Blocks Together
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Cambiando Vidas/Access Living
Casa Central
Casa Guanajuato, Quad Cities
Center for Changing Lives
Centro de Información
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos: Immigrant Workers Project
Centro Romero
Centro San Bonifacio
Chicago Commons
Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
Chicago Department of Family Support Services
Chicago Housing Authority
Chicago Park District
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago Run
Chicago Tech Academy
Children’s Museum of Art/Social Justice
City Bureau
City Clerk’s Office
Claretian Associates
Community Renewal Society
ContraTiempo, NFP
Corazón Community Services
DePaul University
El Hogar del Niño
ElevArte Community Studio
Enlace Chicago
Erie Elementary Charter School
Erie Neighborhood House
Evanston Coalition for Latino Resources
Family Focus, Englewood
Family Focus, Inc.
Family Shelter Services
Farmworker Advocacy Project
Growing Power, Inc.
Grupo SALTO
Healthcare Alternative Systems
High Jump/Open Architecture Chicago
Hispanic American Community Services (HACES)
Illinois Math and Science Academy
Interfaith Leadership Project
Instituto del Progreso Latino
La Casa Norte
La Voz Latina
Latino Consortium
Latinos Progresando
Latino Union of Chicago
Latino United Community Housing Association
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
Mano a Mano Family Resource Center
Metropolitan Family Services
Morton College
Mujeres Latinas en Acción
National Museum of Mexican Art
Network for College Success at the University of Chicago
Northern Alliance for Immigrants
Northwest Side Housing Center
Onward Neighborhood House
Our Lady of Tepeyac Elementary School
P.A.S.O/West Suburban Action Project
Project VIDA, Inc.
Proyecto Pa’Lante, Northeastern Illinois University
Puerto Rican Arts Alliance
R.A.G.E. (Resident Association of Greater Englewood)
The Resurrection Project
Rush Alzheimer’s Disease Center
San José Obrero Mission
San Miguel School Chicago
SER Jobs for Progress, Inc., Lake County
Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project
Spanish Community Center
telpochcalli Community Education Project
UCAN
U.N.I.O.N. Impact Center
United Way Metropolitan, Chicago
University of Chicago Collegiate Scholars Program
Urban Gateways
West Town Leadership United
Youth Service Project, Inc.