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**The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven  
Communities of Color Initiative  
Focus Conversations Report  
October 2002**

**Objectives**

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven through its *Communities of Color Initiative* assumed a leadership role to reach out to promote philanthropy in diverse ethnic communities. Rosario & Associates, on behalf of the foundation, facilitated *focus conversations* within the African American and Latino communities, to explore issues that might have impact on future key strategies of the initiative.

**Methodology**

Rosario & Associates utilized two consultants to facilitate the *focus conversations*: Rosaida Morales Rosario, President of Rosario & Associates, and Dr. Norm Davis, professor at Albertus Magnus. Rosaida Morales Rosario is Puerto Rican and fluently bilingual (Spanish/English) and Dr. Davis is African American.

There were eight 2-hour conversations with groups from the African American community as well as the Latino community. Each community had no more than five focus groups with strategic representation from business leaders, community leaders, political leaders, young professionals and the faith community, respectively. Thirty-six participants attended the *focus conversations*, twenty-seven African American/Blacks and nine Latinos. The participants were identified by the Foundation staff and board members. Invitations were sent, and follow-up before the *focus conversations* was conducted by the Foundation staff. A list of participants is included as Addendum #1.

Both facilitators used a similar *focus conversation* format, which had key questions to guide the discussion. The format and key questions were decided on during a planning meeting with Foundation staff prior to the start of the project. Key questions were:

1. What is the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's image in the African American/Black /Latino community?
2. What are the Top Priority Issues facing the African American/Black/Latino community?
3. What is the appropriate role for the Foundation in addressing these Top Priority Issues?

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Email: RMRosario@attbi.com

4. How can we increase the charitable giving in the African American/Black/Latino community?

The following additional question was asked of the Community/Non Profit Leaders:

5. What technical assistance do you think the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven should provide to the nonprofit community?

The following additional question was asked only of the African American/Black Clergy because the Latino Clergy focus group has not convened:

6. What is the best way to engage the faith community?

Facilitators noted key comments on flipchart paper as the group deliberated and taped all *focus conversations*. These *focus conversations* were held in the conference room of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven during the month of September 2002.

These notes and tapes were analyzed, and the following report includes:

1. Overall Findings: Recurrent themes between the African American and Latino Community Conversations
2. Key Differences & Similarities among the African American/Black subgroups
3. Key Differences & Similarities among the Latino subgroups

### **Overall Findings: Recurrent Themes between the African American and Latino Community Conversations**

It is clear from the results of all the African American/Black and Latino Community Conversations that such dialogue with the communities of color is needed and wanted on an on-going basis. The foundation world in general seems to be little known and poorly understood in the communities of color. What is known or perceived is not positive. Perceptions on the image of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven specifically which are broadly held are that:

- (1) *The foundation is non-responsive to "Communities of Color";*
- (2) *Some said the image is that the foundation is elitist, giving to traditional or "more white" organizations;*
- (3) *The foundation is overly bureaucratic and difficult to navigate;*

The good news is that all focus groups felt that the community conversations were a step in the right direction and every participant without exception wanted to continue participating and improving upon the relationship.

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Lack of quality education and lack of economic development and opportunities emerged as top priorities for all focus groups across both communities. Additionally, these issues were seen as systemic issues and racism was seen as a root cause.

Funding of initiatives was an obvious and appropriate role for the foundation. However, both communities spoke of wanting to see collaboratives formed in their specific communities, which would help identify issues and solutions as well as assist in the implementation of those solutions. They felt that the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven could play a convening role initially and then should fund the on-going research and facilitation for the collaboratives as well as any projects for implementation that emerged from the planning. In addition, the Foundation could play a valuable role in convening other funding sources to look at how and what they fund in the communities of color and to contribute to funding projects emerging from the collaboratives.

With respect to technical assistance both communities agreed that it was necessary but the Latino focus groups were more specific in their needs. They identified:

- *Fund administrative infrastructure particularly financial management;*
- *Fund fund development, research and planning; build capacity for agencies to be able to successfully apply and receive money from foundation, individual donors and other sources;*
- *Fund capacity building in the area of evaluation and outcome measurements;*
- *Fund technology: increasing and updating computer systems, software and staff training;*
- *Fund leadership development within Latino community-Help recruit and train a new generation of Latino leadership (corporate and non-profit) for boards and staff;*
- *Board development; and*
- *Staff Development*

When responding to “How can we increase the charitable giving in the African American/Black and Latino communities” there was general agreement to the following:

- *Foundation must gain trust and credibility by:*
  - (1) *Becoming more visible in the communities of color;*
  - (2) *Marketing the Community Foundation and showing concretely how the Community Foundation is investing/giving in the African American/Black and Latino communities;*
- *Provide more support for African American/Black and Latino community programs;*

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- *Provide assistance to help establish African American/Black and Latino separate funds; provide match/challenge grant and manage funds.*

### **Key Differences & Similarities among African American/Black Community Conversations**

#### **1. What is the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's image in the African American/Black community?**

##### **a) Similarities:**

- 5 out of the 5 groups felt that the foundation was not well known in the African American/Black community;
- Community leaders or human service people may know of the foundation but even that knowledge is limited;
- Majority felt that amongst those who know the foundation the image is not necessarily positive:
  - (1) Perception that the foundation is non-responsive to African American/Blacks;
  - (2) Some said the image is that the foundation is elitist, giving to traditional or "more white" organizations;
  - (3) Perception that the foundation is overly bureaucratic and difficult to navigate;
- Some felt that more recently the image was improving because of efforts such as the "Community Conversations".

##### **b) Differences:**

- There was the suggestion in the Clergy focus group that at least one prospective grantee had been "lied to" [by staff] and that the Foundation staff did not return their phone calls.

#### **2. What are the Top Priority Issues facing the African American/Black community?**

##### **a) Similarities:**

- 5 out of the 5 groups named Education as either #1 or #2 top priority;
- Economic stability/financial empowerment was also named as either #2 or #3 top priority. This usually translated to access to jobs and job training or lack of business development;
- While Racism showed up on only two of the groups top priority list, much of the conversation around the root causes of the issues centered on racism and lack of empowerment.

##### **b) Differences:**

- The Clergy focus group identified two issues not identified by the other groups: lack of affordable housing, and the need for improved community organizational structures;

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- Young Professionals identified the lack of political empowerment among blacks; and
- Political leaders identified the lack of healthcare access.

### 3. What is the appropriate role for the Foundation in addressing these Top Priority Issues?

#### a) Similarities:

- Education:
  - (1) Funding programs that addressed the specific deficits in the educational system: i.e. after school programs, increase more effective technology usage in education, SAT/College prep programs, smaller class size, recruit and retain good teachers;
  - (2) Convening experts who will assist in increasing school system and community knowledge and resources to improve educational quality;
  - (3) Recognize and reward effective programs in the schools and community;
  - (4) Honor parents that succeed with their children.
- Economic Stability/Financial Independence:
  - (1) Fund programs/projects that create jobs, increase skills to obtain jobs, or help people develop small businesses;
  - (2) Utilize and invest in Black own businesses.
- Racism:
  - (1) Adequately address foundation internal issues by increasing number of African American/Black staff and Board members;
  - (2) Fund with large amounts of money (for example: \$10 million) a long term plan that addresses institutional racism in various systems, and the impact it has on the individual;
  - (3) Support research on areas of concern to the African American/Black community, i.e. the question of reparations, and Black philanthropy.

#### b) Differences

- Business Leaders and Professionals focus group explicitly said that the public forums to share information and discuss educational issues should be done “without the presences of public school officials”;
- Political Leaders focus group expanded the issue area of Education to include training and address the adult populations need to improve specific job skills.

### 5. How can we increase the charitable giving in the African American/Black community?

#### a) Similarities:

- Foundation must gain trust and credibility in African American/Black community by:
  - (1) Becoming more visible in the African American/Black community;
  - (2) Marketing itself and showing concretely how the Community Foundation is investing/giving in the African American community;

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- Provide more support for African American/Black programs;
- Provide assistance to help establish a Black fund, provide match/challenge grant and manage fund for community (clergy).

**b) Differences:**

- African American/Black Community and Non-profit leaders felt very strongly that the Foundation should increase their Black representation on the Board

The following additional questions were asked of the Clergy and Community/Non Profit Leaders:

**6. What technical assistance do you think the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven should provide to the nonprofit community?**

**a) Similarities:**

- Both groups wanted the foundation to research, develop and share information on capacity building and provide a list of African American/Black resources that have technical expertise.

**b) Differences:**

- Community/Non Profit Leaders focus groups were more specific regarding the technical assistance:
  - (1) Provide assistance for organizations that might be intimidated by grant application/acquisition process;
  - (2) Augment both staff and Board with “people who understand the greater New Haven Community”.

**7. What is the best way to engage the faith community?**

- a) Make announcements during church services about any upcoming conversations;
- b) Engage members in discussions right after services and provide food and refreshments.

**Key Differences & Similarities among Latino Community Conversations**

**1. What is the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven’s image in the Latino community?**

**a) Similarities:**

- All 3 group stated that the foundation was not well known in the community;
- All 3 groups felt that the perception in the community was that the foundation was not interested in reaching out to Latino community nor funding Latino organizations;
- All 3 groups stated that there was a lack of knowledge about what the foundation does and who it funds;
- 2 out of the 3 groups felt that the foundation’s priorities are not in sync with Latino community needs/wants or expertise.

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**b) Differences:**

- Latino Community/Non-profit Leaders focus group felt that “some of the non-funding related projects were superfluous and ostentatious-specifically capacity building series”;
- Latino Business Leaders and Professionals focus group felt that the foundation lacks connection to Latino professionals who would be a natural conduit to Latino community

**2. What are the Top Priority Issues facing the Latino community?****a) Similarities:**

- Lack of quality education showed up in all three groups top priorities lists;
- Lack of economic opportunity, job training and access to jobs showed up in all three groups top priorities lists;
- Two out of three groups also mentioned lack of small business/entrepreneurial development;
- Two out of three groups viewed issues as “systemic”.

**b) Differences:**

- Latino Community/Non-profit Leaders focus group identified Political Exclusion as one of their top three issues:
  - (1) Lack of access to halls of power;
  - (2) Lack of mobilization;
  - (3) Even when “represented” not necessarily an inclusive process;
  - (4) Sense that system is not there for us so why bother;
- Latino Community/Non-profit Leaders focus group also identified lack of quality health services as a top priority:
  - (1) Physical & mental health services;
  - (2) Lack of access to culturally competent service that will help prevent bad health and maintain good health;
- Political Leaders focus group identified lack of housing as one of their top priorities.

**3. What is the appropriate role for the Foundation in addressing these Top Priority Issues?****a) Similarities:**

- All three groups felt the foundation should play a pivotal role in convening and funding a Latino collaborative effort to:
  - (1) work on strategic plan to identify and resolve issues
  - (2) find common ground amongst differing factions;
- All three groups wanted the foundation to fund and help bring other funders to the table to fund implementation of strategies resulting from the collaborative;
- All three groups wanted the foundation to fund technical assistance and capacity building of Latino organizations;

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- All three groups wanted the foundation to continue dialogue with Latino community.

**b) Differences:**

- Latino Community/Non-profit Leader focus group felt that “ultimately, issues of persistent poverty were intertwined. Any initiative or plan to address the needs of the Latino community must be comprehensive and multidisciplinary”;
- Latino Community/Non-profit Leader focus group also felt that the foundation needed to commit to fund a long-term initiative (with sustained funding for more than 3 years);
- The Political Leaders focus group felt that often funders just want to fund what is new or perceived as innovative but they want the foundation to “fund what is working in the Latino community -don’t reinvent the wheel if it is not necessary”

**4. How can we increase the charitable giving in the Latino community?**

**c) Similarities:**

- All three groups felt that the foundation needed to establish a track record of giving to Latino causes and publicize it so that it could be better known in the Latino community;
- All three groups felt the Foundation should establish a Latino Fund with a challenge grant with “Hoopla”, matching 1:1 money donated by Latino givers to Latino organizations.

**d) Differences:**

- Latino Business Leaders and Professional focus group felt that Foundation should create an initiative to do something substantive in Latino community that would attract Latino donors (gateway is through children’s issues);
- Latino Political Leaders felt the foundation should work with Latino professional group as advisors: Attorneys, and Financial advisors

Although the following additional question regarding technical assistance was only asked of the Latino Community/Non Profit Leaders all three groups specifically said it was necessary:

**5. What technical assistance do you think the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven should provide to the nonprofit community?**

**a) Latino Community/Non-profit Leaders felt the foundation should:**

- Fund administrative infrastructure particularly financial management;
- Fund fund development, research and planning; build capacity for agencies to be able to successfully apply and receive money from foundation and other sources;
- Fund capacity building in the area of evaluation and outcome measurements;

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- Fund technology: increasing and updating computer systems, software and staff training;
  - Fund leadership development within Latino community; Help recruit and train a new generation of Latino leadership (corporate and non-profit) for boards and staff;
- b) Latino Business Leaders and Professionals said “Fund focused technical assistance to Latino organizations”;
- c) While Political Leaders said “Fund capacity building-technical assistance to Latino organizations:
- Board development;
  - Staff Development;
  - Financial systems;
  - Technology;
  - Fund Development skills -especially development of individual donor giving”

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## **Addendum #1: List of Participants**

### **African-American Faith Leaders**

Bishop Theodore Brooks, Beulah Land Development Corporation  
Reverend Eric Smith, Community Baptist Church  
Father Victor Rogers, St. Luke's Church  
Reverend John Henry Scott, Dixwell Avenue United Church of Christ

### **African-American Community and Nonprofit Leaders**

Will Mebane, Amistad America  
Barbara De Baptiste, CT Commission of the Status of Women  
Kyle Ballou, Yale-New Haven Hospital  
Elsie Cofield, Aids Interfaith Network  
Sheila Bell, City of New Haven  
Claude Perry, City of Ansonia  
Barbara Winters, Life Haven  
Walter Esdaile, City of New Haven  
Zannette Lewis, Z Associates  
Curtis Hill, Concept Foundation  
Curlena McDonald, Greater Dwight Management Team

### **African-American Young Professionals**

Dr. Tamiko Jackson, Pediatrician  
Regina Winters, Kenneth Boroson Architects  
Angela Carter, New Haven Register  
Ondria Lucky, United Way of Greater New Haven

### **African-American Political Leaders**

Toni Harp, CT State Senator  
Nathan Joyner, City of New Haven, Alderman

### **African-American Business Leaders and Professionals**

Marc Glenn, Law Office of W. Martyn Philpot & Associates  
Curtis Patton, Yale University  
Sandra Butler-Jones, WTNH-Channel 8  
Edward Cherry, Edward Cherry & Associates  
Bea Dozier-Taylor, Black Print Bookstore  
Lisa Monroe, Black Print Bookstore  
Rolan Joni Young, Updike, Kelly & Spellacy

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Smaller focused conversations were held for the Latino community, including:

**Latino Community & Nonprofit Leaders**

Aida B. Campos, Retired Educator  
Kica Matos, JUNTA  
Asher Delerme, Chemical Abuse Agency  
Patricia McCann Vissepo, Casa Otoñal

**Latino Political Leaders**

David Alvarado, Activist/Hill Development Corporation  
Julio González, City of New Haven  
Jorge L. Perez, New Haven Alderman

**Latino Business Leaders and Professionals**

Pete Rivera, New Haven Chamber of Commerce  
Ariel Martinez, Spanish American Merchant's Association (SAMA)  
John E. Padilla, New Paradigms, Inc.