

Statement

Of

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*Information Policy, Census, and National Archives
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“The 2010 Census: How Complete Count Committees, Local Governments, Philanthropic Organizations, Not-for-Profits, and the Business Community Can Contribute to an Accurate Count”



Subcommittee Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Good afternoon Chairman Clay and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Stacey Cumberbatch and I was appointed on April 7th to serve as New York City's 2010 Census Coordinator. I have over twenty years of experience in public service, philanthropy, and law. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today about efforts underway by the Mayor Bloomberg to complement the work of the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a full and accurate count of New York City's population in the upcoming decennial census.

I will provide an overview of New York City's population, the challenges of conducting a complete count in a City as dynamic and complex as New York and what the City is doing to help address some of these challenges.

An Overview of New York City's Population

The City of New York is the most populous and ethnically diverse city in the United States with a population of 8.36 million people as of July 2008.

Currently, over 3 million of New York City's residents are foreign-born, about one-fifth or approximately 600,000 of whom arrived since 2000. The top 10 foreign-born populations hail from the

Dominican Republic, China, Mexico, Jamaica, Guyana, Ecuador, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, India and Columbia.

While New York City is divided into 5 boroughs, almost 58% of its population, and two-thirds of all immigrants, reside in the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens.

New York City has the largest Chinese population of any City outside of Asia. More people of Caribbean ancestry live in New York City than any city outside of the Caribbean. Over 2.27 million Hispanics live in New York City, more than any other city in the United States. New Yorkers of African descent number 1.95 million, more than double the count in any other U.S. city.

More than 200 languages are spoken with almost half of all New Yorkers speaking a language other than English at home. The top 5 languages spoken are Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Italian and French Creole.

The Challenge of a Complete Count in New York City

The City's diversity has always been its strength. But it also poses a challenge to making sure that everyone is counted in next year's census.

Recognizing the importance of an accurate census count to the City, Mayor Bloomberg signed Executive Order 127 in April creating the NYC 2010 Census Office. The Office's mission is to work with the U.S. Census Bureau's New York Regional Office and lead efforts to engage City agencies, community-based organizations, businesses, non-profits, leaders of faith-based organizations, and all sectors to focus particular attention on outreach to New York's diverse immigrant communities and

neighborhoods who have been historically hard-to-count and in the past have had low participation in the census.

While the City's population exceeded 8 million people for the first time in 2000, only 55% of households mailed back a completed census form, much lower than the average national mail-in response rate of 67%.

As stated earlier, two of the City's five boroughs, Queens and Brooklyn are home to 58% of the City's population and 2/3 of its immigrants and also had the highest concentration of households that did not respond to the mail-in 2000 census form. In fact, there were several neighborhoods where the mail in response rate fell below 40%.

We know there are many different reasons why people do not participate in the census. For example, families living doubled or tripled up in a one family home may fear that information provided on the census form will be shared with City agencies such as the Buildings or Fire Departments. Some people simply do not know what the census is, the value it provides, and that their participation in it can bring resources to their community. Others do not understand that their participation in the census helps the government to properly enforce federal Civil Rights laws, including the Voting Rights Act. Also, many immigrants are fearful that their undocumented status might be disclosed to federal authorities if they complete the census form.

In a city as large, diverse and dynamic as New York, we have to mobilize trusted community voices and institutions across the city to allay fears, reinforce the message that personal information on the census form is strictly confidential and to explain the concrete benefits of an accurate count to each community.

NYC 2010 Census Initiative

The goal of the NYC 2010 Census Office is to ensure a full and accurate count of all New Yorkers by increasing the number of City residents completing the 2010 Census form in March and mailing it back promptly. Thereafter, our goal is to make sure that household residents, who did not mail back a census form in time, then cooperate with census workers who will make field visits to their homes starting in late April to personally collect information about the people living in the household.

There are many examples of how the City is aggressively acting to leverage its own resources and capacity to promote an accurate count in 2010. We are:

- Working with City agencies, such as the City Planning Department, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor's Community Assistance Unit, the New York City Housing Authority, and offices of other elected officials to identify hard-to-count groups and neighborhoods in the City and work overcome some of the barriers to participation I mentioned earlier;
- Working with the City's 5 Borough President Offices to create borough-wide Complete Count Committees comprised of diverse stakeholders from every community and neighborhood;
- Using 311 to receive inquires regarding the 2010 Census and provide timely updated information as the census operation rolls out over the coming months;
- Communicating online via a nyc.gov website dedicated to the 2010 Census translated into 18 languages with a sample

census form, basic information on the census, time-lines, pertinent web links to other information, as well as maps showing how the City did in the 2000 Census;

- Working with the Department of Education to provide outreach to parents through the network of Community Education Councils and to incorporate the “Census in Schools” curriculum for children developed by the U.S. Census Bureau;
- Working with the Department of Youth & Community Development to provide outreach to their extensive network of contractors who provide services in many of the hard-to-count communities in the City;
- Working with the Health and Hospitals Corporation to provide outreach through their network of eleven public hospitals and other facilities serving historically hard-to-count populations; and,
- Work with the New York City Housing Authority and Residents Leaders to target outreach to all people living in public housing or in apartments paid, in part, by the Section 8 program. NYCHA has over 400,000 residents in its traditional public housing and nearly another 250,000 in its Section 8 assisted units.

Our work is ongoing with many other City agencies to leverage their existing communications networks and ongoing events to promote the 2010 Census through distribution of materials and participation in community events.

We have also developed strong working relationships with a number of community based non-profit organizations, including

faith-based organizations such as churches, mosques and synagogues throughout the City. In June, we worked with the New York Community Media Alliance, the New York Immigration Coalition and the U.S. Census Bureau's New York Regional Office to co-host a briefing on the 2010 Census for the ethnic and community press. This joint effort resulted in many articles appearing in the ethnic press about the importance of the upcoming census.

We hosted a briefing on the 2010 Census at City Hall for several philanthropic foundations to learn about the challenges and benefits of achieving a complete count in New York City and encouraged them to support the public awareness and outreach efforts of community-based organizations.

Over the past several months, we have also participated in scores of meetings and events across the City to encourage mass participation in the census.

Mayor Bloomberg recently hosted a briefing entitled "The Changing Face of New York City & the 2010 Census" for the City's Consular Corps. Acknowledging the important role of Consulate Offices in immigrant communities, we requested that each office serve as a point of distribution of census brochures and materials, recommend trusted community leaders and institutions we should contact to help in this efforts, and we requested that each Consulate designate a staff person to be their 2010 Census point person to attend a 2010 Census informational seminar.

The City of New York will continue its efforts over next several months to help the U.S. Census Bureau secure a full and complete count. Thank you.