



**Written Testimony to the
Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee
Oversight and Government Reform Committee**

Submitted by
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Thank you Chairman Clay for your leadership and for this opportunity to submit written and verbal testimony on behalf of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (The National Coalition) and our Unity Diaspora Coalition.

The National Coalition's ***Unity Diaspora Coalition (UDC)***, is an unprecedented network of organizations working together in Black communities (African American, African, Caribbean, Afro-Latino) to forge a comprehensive agenda that includes: 1) promoting, motivating and mobilizing the Black population to fully participate in the 2010 Decennial Census; 2) advocating a complete and accurate Decennial 2010 Census count; 3) targeted efforts to protect the political power of the increasing numbers of those displaced by disaster and economic dislocation which are disproportionately Black; 4) ensuring equitable redistricting plans in key states with significant Black populations; and 5) advocating for critical changes in 2020 census including adding country of origin for the Black population and changing method of counting prisoners*. (*See Attachment A)

As the nation approaches next year's constitutionally-required decennial census, the Census Bureau faces the daunting challenge of achieving a full and complete count of all persons residing in the U.S.

Historically, the Census Bureau has undercounted America's most vulnerable population groups: racial minorities, immigrants, children, and the poor, leading to inequality in political power, access to publicly-supported services, and private sector investment in communities where these population groups live and work.

Past Census counts have proven that undercounting dilutes civil rights, voting rights, funding for communities and fair representation.

The Census Bureau openly acknowledges it has to develop partnerships with community-based groups to reach out to these and other hard-to-count populations. Effective partnerships can help address these looming factors in 2010 Decennial Census outreach efforts: the significant growth of hard-to-count populations, escalating fear of government in immigrant communities, and displacement of families due to the housing/economic crisis and natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Further, the current economic crisis has added a new challenge caused by housing foreclosures which has displaced thousands of families across the country. Also, local governments have been able to augment gaps in funding for Decennial census counts in the past.

However, due to the effects the economic crisis has had on local government budgets, the 2010 Decennial Census will be the first time in recent history when many local governments are not in a financial position to augment funding for local census outreach, even though it is in their political and financial interest to provide funding for census outreach, especially for local complete count committees. Many of these local governments have significant hard to count communities with large Black populations.

Therefore, the philanthropic and business community has the opportunity to be an active partner in addressing the resource gap for 2010 Census outreach efforts through greater funder awareness of decennial census activities and providing support for community-based not-for-profit groups to target members of hard-to-count populations to participate in the census by assisting with funding for complete count committees and organizing efforts.

The Black population is the hardest to count population of all demographic groups, yet the Black civic sector is grossly under resourced to play the critical role it needs to play in helping the Census Bureau to achieve a fair and accurate count of the Black population.

The Unity Diaspora Coalition believes that the not-for-profit Black civic sector has a pivotal role to play if we are to achieve a successful 2010 Decennial Census outcome for the Black population.

The Unity Diaspora Coalition is dedicated to reducing the disproportionate undercount of the Black population by helping the Census Bureau to increase the mail response rates in cooperation with census takers in targeted hard to count (HTC) census tracts. Past Census counts have proven that undercounting dilutes civil rights, voting rights, funding for communities and fair representation.

The Unity Diaspora Coalition has as its primary goal, the development and implementation of a cohesive strategy to address barriers to equitable representation and resource distribution in Black communities related to the 2010 Decennial Census, redistricting and related policymaking.

The National Coalition has secured commitments from several national and local base-building organizations to participate in this historic Unity Diaspora Coalition. **Collectively, UDC partners are trusted voices in the Black community and represent over 5 million constituencies in the African American and Black immigrant communities** including: civil rights, clergy, women, youth, labor, elected officials, academics, fraternities, sororities, policy analysts and grassroots organizing groups working in low income communities.

UDC National Partners include: A. Philip Randolph Institute, African Federation, Institute of Caribbean Studies, The Praxis Project—*Fair Count, Fair Share*, National Urban League, NAACP, NAACP LDF, National Conference of Black Mayors, Institute of the Black World, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, Black Youth Vote, Hip Hop Caucus, The Peoples' Agenda, National Council of Negro Women, 21st Century Foundation—Black Male Initiative, Caribbean Peoples' International Collective, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Black Women's Roundtable, Black Leadership Forum, 100 Black Men of America, National

Association of Black County Officials, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, UniverSoul Circus, Rainbow Push Coalition, National Action Network and over 100 national and local organizations. **UDC partner organizations are working to establish complete count committees in over 18 states.**

The National Coalition and several of its *Unity Diaspora Coalition* partners are currently serving as effective national and community partners for the U. S. Census Bureau because of the pre-existing relationships and networks to Black communities across the country. The partner organizations of the National Coalition have established networks and a history of community involvement; our collective status as community partners and trusted civic engagement and participation resources are being utilized to assist the Census Bureau with alleviating participation barriers for the 2010 census count of the Black population.

The National Coalition hosted a Unity Census 2010 Call to Action Summit in March 2009 and The Praxis Project-*Fair Count, Fair Share* hosted its September 2009 Organizing Meeting which helped to develop best practices recommendations on how to ensure not-for-profit Black organizations can be fully utilized to achieve a fair and accurate count of the Black population in the 2010 Decennial Census including:

1) 2010 Census Partnership Program

Many of the Census Bureau's national and local partners are not-for-profits that have small budgets and have been adversely affected during the economic downturn, therefore, the Census Bureau should encourage reasonable allocation of resources to national partners. The Census Advisory Committee should monitor hiring of partnership specialists to ensure that those who are serving in hard-to-count communities are hired from these communities.

Increase funding and resource allocation for National and Community Partnership Programs. These partnerships will not generate power nor be effective beyond name without financial support to sponsor outreach and coordination.

UDC recommendations to foundations and corporate funders include:

- Link historically under-funded groups to other funders
- Collaborate with grantees as partners
- Fund viral media campaigns
- Make grant template available along with suggestions on where to apply
- Fund Black organizations and community organizing efforts for long-term impact
- Identify non-cash assistance such as offering groups SMS and other technology support

2) Forming Effective Partnerships and Complete Count Committees

The UDC believes it is vital to engage diverse anchor organizations, that will formulate networks that take the lead in centering our civic and community development work in underrepresented communities, integrating that work with ongoing and long-term community organizing, and focusing on building state alliances/networks from the bottom-up. It is our belief that only a steady work of base-building—community strengthening through ever-expanding leadership and participation—will increase the political and civic power of the Black population to act with impact at the local, state and national levels.

The UDC recommends CCC's targeting Black populations encourage collaboration and partnerships between African American, African, Caribbean and Afro-Latino community-based organizations to share and maximize resources, build and encourage civic participation and involvement of all sectors of the Black community.

3) Encouraging Civic Participation and Involvement

The UDC recommends CCC's target Black men and children under 10 who are the hardest to count populations by utilizing trusted voices that reach that demographic. Over 70 percent of Black families are headed by women. Therefore, we recommend groups incorporate a special outreach to Black women, which is key to reduce the undercount of these hard to reach populations.

The National Coalition Unity Diaspora Coalition partners are devoted to removing barriers to full participation of the Black population in the American democratic process and believes that to maximize the success of the 2010 Decennial Census, there must be a special emphasis on HTC communities, overlooked and transit populations. The Unity Diaspora Coalition believes that being counted in the Census is central to the self-determination of all communities in the United States population to achieve economic & political power, voice and justice in our democracy now and for future generations yet unborn.

Thank you again Congressman Clay for this opportunity to share our recommendations with you and the Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee.

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