Everybody Counts: Our Voice, Our Power, Our Census 2020

*Counting Black Residents in the Census*

*This information was originally presented in a webinar hosted by the Association of Black Foundation Executives, which featured speakers from the Florida Restoration Project (Desmond Meade), the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (Nana Gyamfi), and Fathers and Families of San Joaquin (Anthony Robinson). The full recording can be viewed here:* [*https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/2792018864116879367*](https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/2792018864116879367)

**Overview**

Black communities are Hard-to-Count and Hard-to-Colonize. Given our nation’s history of counting Black residents as 3/5s of a person, participating in the Census is an act of resistance.

But Black communities distrust door-knockers, they distrust the Census, and they distrust government. Black organizations need funding to educate these communities about the Census, and to secure the resources they need to make sure residents can complete the Census safely and accurately.

**Challenges and Strategies for Counting the Incarcerated**

* When people are counted at prisons, their participation helps pull in resources for prisons instead of the communities they’re from. In other words, the Census helps fund incarceration, not re-entry. This is a contradiction we have to acknowledge.
* Like prisons, juvenile detention centers are counted as group quarters. According to the penal code, young people should be detained near their families, but states like CA haven’t been in line with that code for over 30 years.
* Effective messages: the Census helps build political power and secure federal resources vital to their communities. It’s an issue of equity.
* Online response will be a huge challenge. Most people coming out of prison lack technology skills.
* Once we get a complete count, we need to continue working to make sure these communities get their fair share of resources and stay mobilized.

**Challenges and Strategies for Counting Black Immigrants**

* Black non-citizens are disproportionately deported, making up only 7.2% of noncitizens but 20.3% of immigrants facing deportation.
* In 2010, people were counted at detention centers. The same contradiction for prisons exists here: the Census guides resources to counties where immigrants are caged, not to communities where they live.
* Immigrants from Chad, Tunisia, parts of North Africa and the Middle East will be counted as white.
* Black immigrants were reluctant to complete the Census form even before the citizenship question.
* GOTC efforts must fund (1) education efforts to teach Black immigrants about the power of representation and resources that come with the Census, and (2) outreach needs in languages other than Spanish.
* Effective messaging: You must be honest and clear. Present immigrants with all the risks and benefits, and let them decide what they’re willing to do. That’s how to build and maintain trust in these communities.