

# **State of Dominicans in the United States in 2011**

By Dr. María Teresa Feliciano

Dominican American National Roundtable  
National Dominican American Council  
14th Annual National Leadership Summit

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Lehman College of The City University of New York  
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Thank you!

U.S. Ambassador Raul H. Yzaguirre, President Ricardo Fernández, Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson, Senators Gustavo Rivera, Juan Pichardo & Ruben Diaz, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Representatives Marcos Devers & Joselyn Pena-Melnyk, Assemblymen Guillermo Linares, Keith Wright and Carl Hastie, Councilmen Robert Jackson, Julio Tavarez & Julio Guridy, Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras, Commissioner Alex Mendez, Distinguished Board of Directors, National Council Chairman Nestor Montilla, Dr. Dilcia Granville, Francesca Pena, Claribel Martinez-Marmolejos, Facundo Knight, Youth President Amaris Guzman, Dr. Julia Lara, Miguel Santana and Luis Facundo, Dr. Ramón Antonio Veras, distinguished panelists and speakers, corporate partners ..... Dominican and Latino Leadership of the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and Latinos and other leaders who have convened here, at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit of The Dominican American National Roundtable and the National Council.

It is a great pleasure for me to be among all of you today as it is, I think, an exciting time to be Latino, Dominican in the United States. Major events and changes are happening in our world today. In the United States, as part of that world, also, that will change the way we live, do business and raise our families.

We are, by our presence and contributions, in the middle of it all: the changing market, the economic crisis, global and continental conflicts, changes in governments, legal, social and scientific breakthroughs. We, as small in numbers as we might seem in comparison with whole countries, or other groups; are here, in the world's capital, and surrounding states, working, learning, living and leaving our mark.

The US Census 2010 said we're 1.4 million -we all know that figure hovers around 2 million – 300,000 in the Bronx alone. Among those with an interest in the political implications of population growth, the question for 2010 is the same as for the 1990s--and that for the 1980s, when will the decade of Latinos finally arrive? Or, when will Latinos begin to have something close to the political power seemingly inherent in their rapidly growing numbers?

Having made our presence felt, and having laid the groundwork in, as this Summit's theme reads, Education, Economic Development, and Community Empowerment, we move towards expanding and perfecting our role in this society.

These three areas are to be perfected if we are to achieve success, as a group. And I venture to say, they must proceed forward in unison.

The first - and most important – is Education. Our children cannot be among the top percentage of school desertion. They must enter and complete college. We must, and can be among the educated and educators in institutions of higher learning. We must be part of the administration of these institutions. We must be among the scientists, inventors, writers, astronauts, legal minds, artists, mathematicians, and financiers who with their daily work make invaluable contributions to society.

The second is *Economic Development*. We can and must be at the high, medium and low spheres of the financial world. The number of Latino-owned businesses in the United States has continued to rise dramatically, and Latinos now have a buying power that exceeds \$650 billion annually. Dominicans continue to dominate in ownership and operation of the small businesses where they concentrate, and are beginning to make inroads in major corporations, banking, and Wall Street.

True Economic Development has to reach our small business owners and entrepreneurs, as well as Dominicans on Wall Street.

The third is *Community Empowerment*. Along with getting on the *Education Train* to success, and developing our potential in the world of finance and business, we must achieve inclusion in the government of this great nation, we have adopted as ours; in the political establishment that designs and decides all aspects of our lives. That our voice can be heard where laws are passed and changed; budgets are submitted and approved; and policies are created.

Two tools should be used in our efforts for empowerment: One, The current Redistricting Process; which affords us the opportunity to create the conditions for electing Dominicans at the municipal, state and federal levels. Submitting and requesting the adoption of maps for city council, assembly, senate and congress that reflect the growth of our population is one basic step we are taking, towards true inclusion.

Coupled with success in the current redistricting process, The National Dominican American Council (NDAC) launches today the *Uno mas Uno, Mi Voto Cuenta*, a national voter registration drive, that will register over 300,000 new voters by the presidential election in 2012. There are Dominicans in the 435 congressional districts in the US, and they will be felt next November.

Creating Coalitions is the second most important step in our journey to empowerment, as we acquire greater strength in U.S. politics. Coalitional politics through compromise has been one of the most effective strategies for empowerment. Fortunately, it seems to be welcomed by the political mood of a new generation of Latino and other leaders who are prepared to coalesce. Leaders like the NDAC council members here today from Puerto Rico, Florida, Washington DC, Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey & New York. Leaders like the DANR fellows going through our program every year. Please stand and be recognized: Fellows Nallely Martinez, Rafaela Zapata, Paola Martinez, Genesis Aquino, Priscellis Perreaux,

& Nathaniel Taveras, under the direction of Youth initiative coordinators Amaris Guzman & Elias Alcantara.

May the next decade find us laboring hard and succeeding in these areas, that the US Census 2020 may reflect, more that how large our population is, a profile of what we have become.

Thank you!