

Cambio de Colores: Latinos in the Heartland

Proceedings of the 10th Annual Conference:
Migration and Shifting Human Landscapes
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Preface

*¡Ah! desgraciadamente, hombres humanos,
hay, hermanos, muchísimo que hacer.
(Oh, unfortunately, human men,
there is much, brothers, so much to be done!)*
-César Vallejo

“Tenth Annual Cambio de Colores conference.” The round number suggests, almost invites us, to bask in it, to throw a couple of firecrackers, and to pat ourselves on the back. Let us use the basking time to reflect and plan, the firecrackers to wake us up, and morph the pat into a firm push, to use the information generated and shared by committed stakeholders and rigorous researchers over the years in this unique conference series.

The key word is “cambio”, meaning “change.” Change in large cities and small towns, change in the level of knowledge we have about the *cambio’s* causes and consequences, and change in the political climate, that seems to preclude any intention to address the cambio in a positive and sustainable way.

We tend to think and act as if the *cambio* is caused only by the arrival of people of different languages and cultures to communities both large and small, and omit the fact that national and foreign immigrants are also responding to powerful social, economic, and cultural beacons that our communities and nation are sending to the world: “workers needed,” “help wanted to replace aging populations,” “investment opportunities.” In other words, demographics and labor demands and the powerful attraction of American culture, are pulling factors that work together to form the components of living the American dream, the selling point heard and seen all over the world.

Most of the conference’s focus has been on the changes experienced in states and communities where immigrants have not come for several generations, resulting in relatively uniform human landscapes. Recently, the Midwest and the Deep South are experiencing changes in a dramatic way, precisely because the combination of aging and outmigration is larger in these regions. The 2010 Census is showing how much we are aging as regions, and how newcomers, especially young Latino or Hispanic immigrants, are helping to keep the economy going, by providing the services needed, and creating a demand for goods and services that is making survival possible for many small towns in the heart of the country.

Conversely, the fact that these communities have not changed much for decades, has resulted in them being quite unprepared to address migration and the consequent shifting human landscapes (the leitmotif of the 2011 conference).

Change is often exciting to observe and usually scary to live, especially when one does not understand the factors causing it or the possible outcomes. Fear, on the other side, may bring the need to find blame, preferably somebody different and vulnerable, like an immigrant without documentation. The climate towards “illegal” immigrants has pervaded politics in many states, resulting in draconian initiatives that ignore socioeconomic factors and human rights and may ultimately result in high social, economic and moral costs, affecting all of us.

Yes, this was the “Tenth Annual Cambio de Colores conference.” There’s so much to be done, and this annual conference needs to keep helping us understand what’s going on in the Heartland, hundreds of miles away from the national borders.

Sincerely,
Domingo Martínez
Cambio de Colores 2011 Conference Director
Cambio Center Director
University of Missouri-Columbia

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Introduction

This is the book of proceedings for the tenth annual conference of Cambio de Colores, Change of Colors, Latinos in the Heartland, that took place in Kansas City June 8-10th 2011. The theme of this year's conference was Migration and Shifting Human Landscapes. Cambio de Colores is an institution that evolved from a Call to Action in Missouri, in 2002, to a Community of Practice about the integration of Latino newcomers to the heartland. The first conference, which took place in Columbia, Missouri, was a fact-finding mission. Participants learned from other states, and explored issues related to immigration, specifically the fast pace of growth and what it meant to rural communities. The conference was literally a call to action. Since then, several institutions have been created at the University of Missouri, such as the University of Missouri Extension Alianzas program (2002), the University of Missouri Cambio Center (2004), and a Latino/Latina Studies program at University of Missouri, Kansas City (2011). It was difficult to find people for the first conference who had research about what was happening in Missouri. Now, there are dozens of projects underway, with researchers and practitioners involved in many impressive collaborative efforts in communities throughout our own state, and across other states. As an institution, Cambio de Colores has been shaped by its stakeholders, who are practitioners, extension professionals, researchers, educators, policy makers, and the community at large, who have "aligned missions," that all seek to foster community wellbeing, and help facilitate the integration of Latino/a newcomers to the economic and social fabric of communities in the Heartland. Every year this conference blends best practices with research, and policy, in order to provide all of its participants with a comprehensive, holistic, and multidisciplinary, view of the factors currently shaping the status of Latinos in the Heartland. This conference also provides knowledge that informs actions and new ways to facilitate integration, education, health, entrepreneurship, and civic participation. In 2011 Cambio de Colores benefitted from the participation of the North Central Extension & Research Activity NCERA 216: Latinos and Immigrants in Midwestern Communities, and SERA 37: The New Hispanic South, increasing the regions where human landscapes are shifting as a result of immigration.

The 2011 conference brought together state-of-the-art research and best practices that informed program participants, decision-makers and policy makers, about the multiple ways that heartland stakeholders are addressing this significant demographic change. The first section of the conference proceedings includes more than 40 abstracts encompassing Change and Integration, Civil Rights, Education, Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, and Health. These abstracts highlight key issues that are currently the focus of practitioners and researchers in the Heartland, with a great emphasis on issues of integration. The second section of the conference proceedings includes 14 papers. This is the largest number of papers submitted so far, and we hope that number will continue to expand in future conferences. The last section includes the program, and the directory of presenters, which serves as a resource to continue learning about each other's work beyond the conference. The current and previous editions of the Cambio de Colores Conference Abstracts and Proceedings can be found at www.cambiodecolores.org/Library/.

The Cambio de Colores conference provided a forum for discussing, sharing, learning, and identifying the critical areas where information and promising practices are being developed, that will help facilitate the successful transition of Latino newcomers into our communities, as well as to provide all members of these communities the information and practices to make these changes in a way that is beneficial to all.

We hope that as you read through the abstracts and papers, and become familiar with the work of presenters, you might consider how your work could contribute to our broader understanding of the demographic changes that are affecting communities, and consider participating in a future Cambio de Colores conference.

Sincerely,
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