

**BARRIERS FACED BY IMMIGRANTS AND
REFUGEES RESIDING IN THE CITY OF
LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS**

A Project of the One Lowell Coalition

Focus Group Summary

Nov. 8, 2001

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FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Introduction

The One Lowell Coalition is a group of community organizations working together to promote civic participation and greater integration of Lowell's many immigrant and refugee communities. Approximately half of Lowell's population is composed of these minority members, yet they are poorly represented in the public life of the city. The purpose of these focus groups is to better understand the barriers and opportunities open to Lowell newcomers, so that adequate strategic planning can occur to promote a more democratic, healthy, and well functioning city that recognizes both the contributions and needs of these groups.

Immigrants and refugees are regularly under represented in government promoted census data. New comers to the United States bring with them both cultural and personal experiences that lead them to fear people who are unknown to them, especially when these people represent the government. Many immigrants and refugees have experienced extremely oppressive, corrupt governments and police brutality that discourages their participation in public life, including providing information for census data. In addition, some immigrants and refugees have a vulnerable resident status that also promotes a reluctance to expose themselves publicly. Therefore, One Lowell is using population estimates of these communities in Lowell based on data provided from the mutual assistance organizations that work directly with these communities. Population estimates stand at:

- Cambodians - 30,000
- Latinos/Hispanics –20,000
- Brazilians - 12,000
- Portuguese - 7500
- Africans - 6000
- Laotians - 5000

Focus Group General Information

The focus groups occurred between October 11 and October 26. A total of eight focus groups were conducted with Lowell's immigrant and refugee communities. Two focus groups were conducted with Cambodians, due to the large Cambodian population in Lowell and one group each occurred with participants from the following communities: Brazilian, Laotian, Portuguese, Hispanic/Latino, and African. In addition, one Leadership Focus group took place in which leaders from each of the ethnic communities, except for the Laotians, participated.

These groups were moderated in the English language to promote standardization among the various groups, and then translated into languages native to each group through a native speaking translator. Focus group moderators were trained in the facilitation of these groups. Questions for the groups came from a standardized script. A different script was used in the Leadership Focus Group. A single individual was responsible for note taking in English for all the focus groups, which increased standardization but eliminated the possibility of utilizing many direct quotes for this

analysis. For each group the note-taker followed specific instructions for summarizing the data from each group utilized in this report.

Focus groups occurred at various times of the day, evening, and weekend, depending on the availability of participants among the various community groups. Group time was flexible to promote maximum representative participation from each community. A Leadership Focus Group was conducted that included leaders from each of the above mentioned communities. This focus group was conducted entirely in English and did not follow the same format as the community focus groups.

Each community was responsible for selecting members from their communities to participate in these groups. Criteria for member selection included:

- Focus groups should be limited to 10 to 12 participants. Larger groups will not allow for all participants to participate fully in each theme/question raised.
- Participants generally should not know one another and should ideally not know the moderator or interpreter. Focus groups often employ participants who are strangers to reduce sharing in ways that acquaintances might expect and to increase anonymity for the sake of honest responding.
- Ages of participants should be from 22 to 55.
- Balance gender (i.e. if group has 10 participants, no more than 6 should be from one gender)
- 40% should be in the United States three years or less.
- Care should be taken to select members who have some common contact with/exposure to the specific themes of involvement in the workplace, educational opportunities, community involvement, and naturalization, citizenship, and political involvement.

Some ethnic groups had difficulty meeting all of the above criteria due to the nature and longevity of their community in Lowell. Above all, the goal of the focus groups was to elicit information from a representative sample from each community. The One Lowell Coalition feels satisfied that this condition was well met.

Demographics*

Participants have lived in Lowell from a minimum of one month among Brazilians to a maximum of 32 years among the Portuguese. Age among participants ranged from 20 years in the Portuguese group to 84 years in the Hispanic/Latino group, with an average of 39 years. All but one group had more woman participants than men, ranging from 33% women in the African group to 77% women in the leadership group. Overall, 2/3's of the participants were women. The Cambodians had both the largest and smallest groups; with one group having 10 participants while the other had 17. The average number of participants per group was 12. Unemployment ranged from 95% in the Laotian group to 0% in the Brazilian group with an overall rate of 36% (not including leadership group). The Brazilians had the highest overall level of education. Ten Latinos/Hispanics are citizens and one is in the process while only six of 27 Cambodians are citizens.

* This summary does not include information from the Leadership Focus Group.

LACK OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

All groups identified **lack of English language skills** as the primary difficulty in finding employment, advancing in their place of employment, in accessing educational opportunities, becoming more involved in their communities, and increasing their civic participation. Learning a second language for monolingual adults can be extremely difficult. Some groups mentioned that learning English verbs was especially challenging. Those at greatest disadvantage to learning English appear to be those who arrived in the US without literacy skills in their native language. A man in the Portuguese group reported that he is illiterate in Portuguese and has had such difficulty learning English that he has failed his driver's permit exam 18 times because he could not read English.

Lack of opportunity to practice speaking English with others also made learning English more difficult. For some, this was due to working in an environment with other native language speakers or isolation at home. Many women in the Portuguese group reported that only Portuguese was spoken at home because of their husbands' demand that their children speak Portuguese. These women felt that this was socially harmful to them, since they rarely had the opportunity to speak English outside the home. They were also concerned that it kept their children back when they first went to school. All felt that they wanted their children to speak Portuguese, but not at the expense of learning English because it would decrease future opportunities for their children.

Everyone expressed the desire to improve their English skills and most felt that ESL classes were the best place for doing that. However, barriers also exist to taking these classes. Frequently mentioned barriers by all immigrant groups included: class schedules incompatible with work schedules, lack of childcare, limited enrollment, lack of information available regarding ESL classes, lack of time, and lack of financial resources. Two Brazilians reported that their employer was providing them with on the job ESL classes, which appeared to be an excellent way to overcome all the barriers mentioned above. These same barriers were reflected for other educational opportunities as well.

Most immigrant groups take classes at their mutual assistance associations when these are available. The advantage to taking classes at mutual assistance associations is that the instructors usually speak the student's native language, the classes are culturally appropriate, and students feel a greater sense of security. As one Cambodian reported, "I just walked in and helped myself. I registered and took tests. There's no one there who speaks Khmer to help us. That's why many Cambodians choose to take ESL at CMAA." Other places where members of the various focus groups take classes include the Adult Basic Educational Classes at Lowell High and employment offices. The highest level of satisfaction with classes was found among those who studied at the mutual assistance associations. Cambodians reported that they have access to some classes through a church. The church services are viewed very highly as they provide transportation and train newcomers in basic things like going shopping and to the Laundromat.

Although lack of English skills is a barrier for many things, all groups found that they could participate at religious institutions that were linguistically and culturally compatible to their native language and culture. In these churches and temples, language and culture barriers did not exist. For every group, their greatest community involvement

was at churches and temples. Churches particularly are credited with helping immigrants with specific needs such as food, and for outreaching to the immigrant communities. Two groups also reported involvement with local neighborhood associations, including Latinos/Hispanics who are involved with the Coalition for A Better Acre and the Portuguese, who are involved with the Back Central Neighborhood Association. Latinos/Hispanics expressed a desire to have a mutual assistance association to better meet the needs of their community.

At least some members in all of the groups appear to have made some attempts to become involved with local PTO's. The primary difficulty reported was that the meetings always take place in English and no translators are provided. Other difficulties were also mentioned in regards to the PTO. For example, one Brazilian woman who spoke some English said that she was used in the meetings as a non-official translator. Others felt that their voice was not heard in these meetings, nor in other school related meetings.

Almost all groups complained that going to the hospital was difficult and scary because of language barriers. Many have to wait for a family or community member who speaks both languages to go with them. The Portuguese, Cambodian, and Laotian groups particularly mentioned this. Laotians reported that there are no physicians in Lowell who speak Lao and would very much like access to one. Laotians, Latinos/Hispanics, and Portuguese were also concerned with the lack of services of all types for the elderly in their community who generally do not speak any English.

LACK OF ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a particularly strong barrier to accessing job and educational opportunities, but also diminishes ones ability to participate in community organizations or civic events. A Latino/Hispanic woman reported that at one point she was earning \$100 per week, but spending \$55 per week on transportation. Another woman reported, "I attended ESL and computer classes at CMAA but because the weather was cold and I don't drive, I had to quit. The last city bus leaves at 6:30 and class ends at 7:00." Others stated that CMAA has a van, but no funding to pay someone to drive the van. Public transportation in Lowell is unable to meet all the transportation needs of immigrants and refugees as well as being very costly for those with low (no) income. In some cases, immigrants may need assistance in learning how to use public transportation. For example, a Laotian woman reported that she couldn't even get to the doctor's office for lack of transportation. When asked about public transportation, her son replied, "She can't take the bus, she don't know when to get off or where to go, how to take it."

Owning a car is another option for immigrants but barriers also exist for this option. Buying a car can be complex for the immigrant, assuming that they can afford to buy one. The process of learning how to drive, passing the English language driver's exam, shopping for a car, negotiating a fair price, registering the car, paying the taxes on the car, paying for the car insurance, can be daunting for a non-English speaker who is also at a disadvantage to understanding this cultural process. All the Laotians had a driver's silence, but only about 4 out of 13 had a car. They don't use public transportation; they prefer to depend upon family or friends with a car. In addition, undocumented residents, while legally permitted to buy a car, are not legally permitted to

obtain a driver's license so that they can legally drive the car. As one focus group member stated, "They let us buy a car, make payments, and pay insurance, but they won't let us have a license to drive it."

EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION

Many immigrants and refugees felt that they were exploited in the workplace. All the Cambodians agreed that racial discrimination had kept them AND other minorities from advancing in their jobs and caused them to be fired more often. However, one man attributed his lack of job advancement to lack of education and not playing up to the boss. Undocumented immigrants reported working 10 hour days in which they stood, performing physically intensive labor, with few breaks, in a poorly kept physical environment. Most reported that they received lower wages and fewer benefits than others. A Laotian woman reported making necklaces at .20 each, earning \$6.00 per day. One woman reported that once, when she was working at a factory, the legal immigrants were all laid off and replaced by illegal immigrants who were willing to work for lower wages. Interestingly, she perceived this event as discrimination against her rather than exploitation of the other immigrant group.

Although most Americans think that sweatshop labor is a thing of the past, immigrant residents in Lowell are currently being exploited in factories and other work arenas. Undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to their fragile immigration status. These immigrants and refugees perform an immense service to the American economy, taking low-paying jobs that other Lowell residents don't want; yet their contribution usually goes unacknowledged. Many of the focus group members mentioned that their labor often goes unrecognized by others. The participants in these focus groups radically confront the stereotype of immigrants who come to this country to mooch off welfare. They are hard-working members of the American under class, who provide a stable labor force that under girds the American economy and allows middle class Americans to enjoy goods and services that otherwise they would not be able to readily afford.

While most groups mentioned discrimination from the established American community, some groups reported that they were discriminated against when compared to other immigrant groups in the city of Lowell. Two ethnically different groups reported that they felt that the Latinos/Hispanics were given preferential treatment over other minority immigrant groups, "There is a preference for Hispanics in Lowell."

In the African focus group nearly everyone had a graduate degree from their home country yet they perceived high levels of discrimination when taking classes. One participant reported that a teacher said that, "no foreign born student is good at English." They feel that the receiving community and teachers particularly need to be more receptive, "Minority teachers do a better job and are more tolerant." Women engineers and science majors in the African community reported experiencing a harsh mixture of racism and sexism.

Several immigrant groups also mentioned discrimination towards their children in the Lowell public school system. Parents in the African focus group stated that big differences exist between their African children and American children who are of African descent, but that these differences are not being adequately addressed in the

schools, to the detriment of African children. For example, many of their children attended private English speaking schools in Africa, which are much more advanced than schools in this country. However, their children continue to be taught material, which they have already mastered, which leads to boredom, which leads to acting out behavior.

Brazilian parents echoed this concern as well, since their children too had been taught in private schools with advanced curriculums. They similarly echoed their fears regarding behavior problems that arise because their children are not being academically challenged. A Latino/Hispanic woman reported that the school system is not addressing the needs of her hearing-impaired son, which as stated in the American Disability Act, should be addressed. She would like to organize a parent group of other children with disabilities, but the school refuses to give her the names of the children. She is unsure of how else to organize these parents. She also believes that immigrant parents are unaware of their right to request special services for children with learning and other disabilities. Other members of this group said that they would appreciate training on how to fight the system and air grievances.

The perception of discrimination is also a barrier to greater civic participation and community involvement. Some immigrants reported that they do not feel welcomed by the receiving community when they attend “outside” activities, “Everyone should be treated the same, this would make us feel more welcomed and want to participate more.” Cambodians felt that politicians make little effort to outreach to their community, with the exception of Marty Meehan. His outreach to the Cambodian community and employment of Cambodians in his office has created a sense of trust between him and these Cambodians. All the Cambodians were very proud of Rithy Uong, a Cambodian and elected official on the Lowell City Council. A member of the Latino/Hispanic focus group reported that he campaigned for Rithy. Rithy is the only minority member of the Council. One Cambodian stated, “Now I don’t mind paying taxes as much because at least I feel like my community is represented.”

Discrimination also appeared as a positive motivation for one Cambodian man to attain citizenship. He stated that, “I want to be a police officer, you know why? There was a drive by at my house. We called the police and because of the neighborhood we were in it took them 1-½ hours to arrive. If one of us gets in a car accident with a Caucasian we get questioned first. But I can’t become a police officer until I am a citizen.”

LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Another repetitive theme throughout the groups was the lack of financial resources; this appeared to have a big impact on all groups. They mentioned a lack of money as a barrier to attending ESL and other classes, even if the cost was only transportation. This also impacted their community involvement, job training, and job searching, as they could not pursue jobs using the Internet because few owned computers. Some also mentioned the cost of applying for citizenship. One Latino/Hispanic woman reported that once her plane got stuck and she had to miss her appointment that forced her to start the entire process all over and pay an additional \$300.

Several people mentioned working more than one job due to their need for income, which cut down on their time to become more involved in the community.

Some Africans reported that many in their community are currently interested in simply making as much money as possible, in order to take care of themselves and to send money back home: “Part of the problem is now we’re just here and we’re worried about making money, but soon we’ll be more settled and start worrying about the welfare of the whole community.”

LENGTH OF TIME IN THE UNITED STATES

Length of time in the United States appears to impact successful integration of the workplace for immigrant groups. For example, the most recent immigrant groups, Africans and Brazilians, were able to find employment if they were willing to accept a number of limitations, especially among the type of work sought. All of the Brazilians were employed and all but one African was employed. One African participant reported that 90% of all Africans in Lowell work at the nursing homes. Brazilians identified a specific packaging company as a main employer of Brazilians. Brazilians find work in factories, cleaning companies, restaurants, and fast food chains. Although the current rate of employment in these newcomer groups was very high, some did mention that their job market niches were tightening due to the downturn in the economy.

Among the better-established immigrant groups, a greater variety of work was found as well as greater unemployment. Portuguese and Latinos/Hispanics mentioned that they are more likely to be hired when the person doing the hiring is from their ethnic community. This implies that some people from these communities have been promoted to positions in which they are able to hire others. This also increases the employment opportunities for these groups. These groups reported a history of working in factories; in some cases specific immigrant communities primarily staffed these factories. Many Portuguese reported learning Spanish before English because of their work in predominantly Spanish-speaking factories. Today, predominantly Portuguese-speaking factories can be found which employ Portuguese residents in Lowell.

Surprisingly, the more established groups were less employed than the newcomer groups. While many established immigrants and refugees still work at fast food chains, restaurants, and nursing homes, at least one person reported being in management. Most discouraging were reports from the Lao group, where every person in their community was unemployed except for the woman who was subcontracted to produce necklaces for .20 each. Most had previously been employed in factories. Many reported being laid off; one man had been laid off after 18 years of working as a machine operator. Another Laotian reported that she was ill from chemical exposure at the workplace, but did not appear to understand that she had certain workplace rights, such as the right to workman’s compensation, or the right to sue the factory.

CULTURAL BARRIERS

Cambodians and Africans mentioned that the hierarchical nature of the American workplace has been a difficult cultural adjustment to make. Among Cambodians, no one felt that their supervisor recognized their work, “They don’t give us any positive feedback to make us feel better or proud.” This may be due to poor management experienced by these focus group members, discrimination, or may point to a cultural

difference in which positive feedback is not simply desirable but necessary for one to feel good about the work that they do.

Some groups reported that they lacked cultural understanding in how to navigate the American work system, from writing resumes, to interviewing, to negotiating salaries. All immigrant groups stated that they found jobs through connections to others in their immigrant community, or through a small number of employment agencies in Lowell that place immigrants (including undocumented immigrants). One participant in the Cambodian group described Cambodians as “Our people are not aggressive, we keep quiet and are passive until you block our way entirely. If there is still some room to get around you, we will keep quiet, you have to block the whole way. Our nature is soft.” The American job search process requires hard-nosed, survival-of-the-fittest aggressiveness, which pits many job applicants against one another. This process is often overwhelming and humiliating, even for native-born Americans. This aggressive process may be a cultural barrier to immigrant groups coming from rural or socialist societies, who are unused to such aggressive capitalistic methods.

The striking lack of employment among nearly all the members of the Lao focus group members provokes the need to better understand what is happening in this community. A number of possibilities come to mind: 1) greater cultural difficulty in assimilating the American job search system, 2) a smaller immigrant community which naturally has a smaller network of connections, 3) lack of language appropriate job seeking services. Their difficulties may be related to all three possibilities. All the Cambodians referred to the help they received in resume writing, interview preparation, translation, and job search related assistance they received from the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA). The Lao mutual assistance association does not have the ability to provide these services to their people, nor meet other needs in this community. While the other immigrant groups, except for the Latinos/Hispanics, have mutual assistance associations in the city of Lowell, the other organizations are vastly under funded and therefore not able to provide job related services to their communities. Africans stated that they are proud of the new African Assistance Center. One person, admiring the work done at the CMAA, mentioned that, “When I look at the CMAA I’m jealous of what they’re doing for their community.” Members of the Latino/Hispanic group stated that they would like to have a mutual assistance association.

LACK OF TRUST

Lack of trust was identified as a barrier to civic participation. Only six of 27 participants in the Cambodian groups reported being citizens and voting. While some would like to vote, others felt that the government and the democratic process couldn’t be trusted. Several of the focus groups echoed these thoughts and worried about being “found out” by the government and deported. Within the Latino/Hispanic group, the Columbians reported that they don’t trust the government or the democratic process. They don’t believe that their vote counts.

Immigrants reported that their lack of involvement in activities outside of their ethnic communities also include a lack of trust, “If you don’t speak much English it’s hard to communicate and they look down on you, I don’t feel comfortable. Cambodians are shy. A group like this is fine, we trust Americans, but out there, no.” The Portuguese

reported that they have a cultural inclination to stay at home in their own safe neighborhoods. Almost all agreed that the Portuguese are reserved and raised with a sense that being at home with family is most important. However, they take their citizenship seriously: seven are already citizens and all others have a strong interest in becoming citizens. Those who are able to vote do so. Most of the Latinos/Hispanics were from Puerto Rico and therefore had citizenship by birth.

LACK OF TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Some mentioned lack of job training skills and lack of education as barriers to employment, but most saw these lacks as barriers to work related advancement. They stated that their low income constrains them financially from pursuing more training or education. Some reported that they would like to start their own business, but lack both capital and training. Other groups complained that high school and college degrees achieved in their home countries were not recognized here. Many immigrants have tried to have their diplomas from home certified/translated to the U.S., yet this has not helped them get work. Still others are unable to receive full transcripts from home. Some appeared to be unsure of the process by which foreign certificates can be verified in this country. Some immigrants reported feeling frustrated because they came to this country as professionals yet are relegated to low skilled, repetitive, labor-intensive jobs that vastly underutilize their professional skills and abilities.

Lack of information has made it difficult for many immigrant groups to access educational opportunities. This was also given as a barrier to voting. Although many of the immigrants are US citizens, some don't vote because they do not have sufficient information in their languages that describe the issues or candidates. The Lao group said that they need help in learning US history as well as language and mentioned that an organization called the Indo-Chinese Foundation, which is no longer in existence, provided them with ESL and Citizen Assistance Classes. Now, however, they say that no one is providing this type of training for them. Almost no one from any of the groups had ever participated in a political campaign. Misinformation also prevented two Latinos/Hispanics from getting their citizenship. They were told they had to wait 15 years to become citizens because they don't speak English.

Other Issues

Brazilian parents were concerned about the bilingual education their children were receiving. They discussed the merits of the program including helping their children transition between cultures and language, allowing parents become more involved with their children's education since the language barrier is crossed, and helping to maintain their cultural heritage. On the other hand, parents felt that the program and quality of teaching in the bilingual program was poor, except at the Pine Elementary School.

Needs identified through these focus groups:

1. Greater access to ESL for all groups is vital
2. The issue of public transportation in Lowell
3. Education to increase job skills and explain the American process
4. Education on rights in the workplace
5. Cultural training of employers
6. Engagement of employers in ESL
7. Education for parents of children with disabilities: rights and care
8. Empowerment of parents for working with Lowell public school system on behalf of the children
9. Accessible services for minority elders
10. Address the public policy related to driver's licenses
11. Raise awareness to gross exploitation of the undocumented
12. Language appropriate materials for public campaigns
13. Information on transference of foreign documents
14. Voter registration drives coupled with education on American democracy
15. Strengthening of Mutual Assistance Associations
16. Strong outreach to engage immigrant/refugee churches and temples in public integration of members

REPORT ON THE LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUP

All the refugee/immigrant communities were asked to nominate four leaders from their communities to participate in the leadership focus group. One Lowell invited all the leaders proposed by their respective communities. Members were required to speak English in order to participate in this group, which may have limited the pool of leaders. Leaders who participated were from the following countries of origin: 2 Brazil, 2 Portugal, 2 Cambodia, 1 Cameroon, 1 Uganda, 1 Dominican Republic.

THE LEADERS

Most leaders who participated in this focus group were recognized for their involvement with their communities. Many engaged in volunteer work at their churches, temples or at neighborhood organizations such as Coalition for a Better Acre or the Back Central Neighborhood Association. Others are employed or volunteer at their community mutual assistance associations. All agreed that the most important quality in a leader is that they are someone who can be trusted. Leaders must be motivated by the desire to help their community rather than self-promotion. Leaders recognized within the refugee and immigrant communities are not necessarily those who are recognized in the receiving community. Leaders must have good moral character; their words and actions, in public and private, must be in sync. Leaders must also be able to guide others and solve problems. As one person stated, "We now have a new breed of leaders - the entrepreneurs. This is really turning out to be good. Once someone owns a store people start coming and asking where can I buy a car, where can I get a house? They assume because you knew enough to start a business, they think you know the rest." One African reported that, "I'm thinking who are our leaders and I'm thinking the leaders are all pastors." Interestingly, communities had the freedom to invite clergy to this leadership focus group. Few communities nominated clergy to be members of this group. However, some were invited to participate and among these, all failed to respond to the One Lowell invitation.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Some felt that leadership needs to be developed at an early age, and specifically that children need access to good education in order to become future leaders. Others felt that leaders emerge naturally, but that even natural leaders need training focused on integrating their communities into mainstream America.

Only one leadership development program was mentioned as currently existing in the Lowell area. This is an after school program at the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS) focused on leadership development in youth. However, this group did not lack for ideas on what kinds of leadership development programs their communities need.

Many agreed that communities need training on grant writing, fundraising, and networking, so that they can build up existing services and create new services at their various religious and community organizations that work with the communities. They would like to see a central location in the city which would provide information and

referral services for all kinds of services, from how to get a driver's license, social security card, etc. to how to find a job, housing, etc. Several voiced that City Hall should have a special office for this, and that it should be staffed by at least one member from each of their communities. Everyone wants to see all of Lowell's refugee/immigrant communities come together to form one powerful voice in the community, and want to see One Lowell help facilitate the formation of a Refugee/Immigrant Coalition. The Coalition could facilitate the development of: 1) a centralized referral service, 2) trainings related to leadership development and accessing funding for community service needs, 3) a united refugee/immigrant community in Lowell which could speak on behalf of the communities and facilitate cooperation among groups. There is a VERY strong desire to be heard in City Hall, "It is very important for us to come together as immigrants. Right now we're all first generation, but the city can't continue keeping us divided into small ethnic communities as we advance into the second and third generations."

There was also a desire to help one another and for communities with more resources to share with those who have less, "If there's one apple on a tree and everyone's trying to pick that apple, the tree's going to fall down. So our challenge is to find out how to split that one apple between everyone because maybe the Brazilians don't have as good a leader, or as many people, how they gonna get the apple?" "The Coalition could also provide a forum for the refugee and immigrant groups to come together to teach one another about the skills that they learned because some groups have been here a lot longer than others and could be helpful to the newcomer groups."

Finally, these leaders did not want this focus group to be the end. "Even bringing us together today is very important and this needs to continue."