



San Francisco  
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# **Power in Partnership: Strengthening Bay Area Latine Communities' Regional Power Through Collective Leadership**

A Report on the Latine Bay Area Regional Convening  
May 29, 2025 | Juntos Fruitvale, Oakland

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## Executive Summary

With \$33.5 billion in annual purchasing power and representing 22% of the Bay Area's population<sup>1</sup> Latine communities are a vital force in the region's social and economic fabric. On May 29, 2025, over 125 nonprofit leaders, elected officials, philanthropic, and Latine community leaders came together for an unprecedented regional convening to confront systemic underrepresentation and disinvestment and build collective power.

*"We are in the fight of our generation." — Fred Blackwell, San Francisco Foundation*

The Latine Bay Area Regional Convening was co-chaired by Chris Iglesias, CEO of Unity Council, and Ani Rivera, CEO of Galería de la Raza, in partnership with the San Francisco Foundation's Latine Kitchen Cabinet. The event focused on urgent challenges facing the region's approximately one million Latine residents. Though Latine communities are a significant economic and demographic force, they remain underrepresented in leadership—holding only 13% of elected positions—and face severe housing burdens, with 53% of Latine renters spending at least 30% of their income on housing.

The convening began with opening remarks from Fred Blackwell, CEO of San Francisco Foundation, and Julián Castro, CEO of Latino Community Foundation, highlighting the historic significance of the gathering and reaffirming their foundations' commitment to Latine communities. Next, a data presentation outlined the strengths and the barriers facing Latine families and communities in the Bay Area. Attendees participated in four breakout sessions focused on: Immigrant justice, Narrative change to build power, Housing and the local economy, and Nonprofit sustainability. The day concluded with a panel of government and philanthropic leaders discussing the importance of public-private partnerships in advancing equity in the region.

## Emerging Priorities

Six critical priorities for the Bay Area emerged:

- Building organizational resilience in an era of funding cuts and political and legal attacks
- Creating flexible capital and community-led housing solutions
- Developing regional cultural power, infrastructure, and cultural narrative
- Establishing coordinated legal aid and immigrant protection systems
- Building strong regional coordination across sectors
- Following a concrete road map that holds systems and stakeholders accountable

*"We are standing strong with our values." — Claudia Arroyo, Prospera*

The convening concluded with calls for sustained regional coordination, including follow-up convenings and specific action items spanning civic engagement, resource sharing, and policy advocacy. As participants emphasized, the challenges facing Latine communities transcend any

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<sup>1</sup> All demographic, economic, and political representation data from: Mora, Cristina and Vargas, Nicolas, May 29, 2025, *State of Latinos in the Bay Area* (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties) [Plenary Session] Latine Bay Area Regional Convening, Oakland CA. Doctors Mora and Vargas are part of the UC Berkeley Institute of Global Studies and Latinx Research Center. Data Sources: American Community Survey (ACS), CA Department of Education, US Census Bureau, California Community Population Survey, Latine Data Hub – UCLA.

single organization or locality. They require unprecedented collaboration, collective action, and solidarity between sectors.

## **Introduction: A Historic Regional Gathering**

*“The antidote to fear and isolation is community.” — Fred Blackwell, San Francisco Foundation*

Convening Bay Area Latine leaders at this moment was both strategic and urgent. While Latine communities have long been organizing within individual counties and cities, the scale of current challenges—from housing displacement to federal immigration policies—demanded a coordinated and urgent regional response that could leverage collective power across jurisdictional boundaries. The timing reflected the community's growing political strength and recognition that isolated efforts, however successful locally, were insufficient to address systemic inequities affecting the more than one million Bay Area Latine residents.

“This is the first time we have had a regional conversation about the Latine role in the region, in improving the region,” said Fred Blackwell, CEO of the San Francisco Foundation, in his opening remarks to Latine leaders from Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties.

A summary report of the convening follows, including highlights from a presentation of current data on the Latine community, breakout sessions on key issues, a session with local government and philanthropy, and a roadmap for moving forward.

*“This is a dangerous, unique, and regressive moment. Our community has a target on its back. On immigration, healthcare, education, and much more, the progress we all achieved in so many movements is being dismantled in front of our eyes.” — Julián Castro, CEO, Latino Community Foundation*

The San Francisco Foundation's Latine Kitchen Cabinet (LKC), comprised of over 25 Bay Area Latine nonprofit leaders, organized this invite-only gathering with support from the San Francisco Foundation, California Health Care Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Latino Community Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

## **By the Numbers: Latine Bay Area Power, Challenges, and Opportunities**

Understanding the demographic and economic landscape is essential groundwork for strategic planning. The comprehensive data presentation established a shared foundation for all participants, quantified community assets that could be leveraged for political power, and documented persistent disparities that required coordinated intervention. The data allows regional strategies to be grounded in empirical reality and supports compelling arguments for increased investment and policy attention from philanthropic and government partners.

Dr. Cristina Mora and Dr. Nicolas Vargas of the University of California, Berkeley, presented data from their [“State of Latinos in the Bay Area”](#) research (referenced above). The research revealed significant community assets and persistent structural barriers. It features data from the

five-county Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Mateo, and San Francisco) and received federal funding supported by Senator Alex Padilla and Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

The scale and economic significance of the Bay Area’s Latine communities provide a foundation for understanding their potential political influence and the magnitude of resources at stake in regional policy decisions. *For a complete presentation, see “[State of Latinos in the Bay Area](#).”*

## Data Summary

Area	Key Data Points	
<i>Key 5 County Bay Area Statistics:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ~ One million Latine residents (22% of the Bay Area population)</li> <li>• 65% Mexican origin (657,000), 19% Central American (197,000), and smaller populations from South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. Central Americans represent nearly double their statewide percentage (19% of the Bay Area vs. 10% statewide).</li> <li>• \$33.5 billion annual purchasing power</li> <li>• 30% of all youth under age 18</li> <li>• 63% are US-born citizens</li> </ul>	
<i>Latine Purchasing Power by County (Marin data not available):</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alameda County: \$12.0 billion</li> <li>• Contra Costa County: \$9.6 billion</li> <li>• San Mateo County: \$6.1 billion</li> <li>• San Francisco County: \$5.8 billion</li> </ul>	
<i>Housing Crisis and Political Representation Gap</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53% of Latine renters face housing cost burdens, while only 36% of white renters experience similar burdens.</li> <li>• Latine homeownership rates vary dramatically across the region, from 25% in San Francisco to 54.7% in Contra Costa County.</li> </ul>	
<i>Latine Political Representation</i>	Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22% of the Bay Area population, but only 13% of elected leadership positions in the five-county Bay Area.</li> </ul>
	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.3 million Latine people are eligible to vote statewide, but only 4.5 million voted in 2024.</li> </ul>

The data snapshot is a rich source for insights moving forward. For example, it reveals that over 60% of the Bay Area’s Latine population is US-born, underscoring the community’s significant potential for political influence and electoral impact. Despite this, only 4.5 million Latine voters participated in the 2024 election out of 8.3 million eligible, highlighting a gap in civic engagement and outreach. Presenters noted that donor and political engagement efforts have not sufficiently reached Latine communities, raising essential questions about better mobilizing this untapped power.

Additionally, the region’s Latine purchasing power is substantial, yet there remains a disconnect between economic strength and the sense of influence within local communities. Addressing

this gap requires intentional efforts from government and philanthropy to recognize the community's value and power. Finally, the data shows that Latine political representation does not reflect the community's demographic presence, prompting a call to focus on electing more Latine leaders who are connected to the community and can champion the work.

## Regional Strategic Priorities: Cross-Sector Solutions

*“We ourselves, individually or as organizations, cannot do everything, but together we can.” — José A. Quiñonez, Mission Asset Fund*

Following the data presentation, participants were divided into four working group sessions for initial conversations. The goal was to create a regional plan for collective action to build equity and power. The four working groups were nonprofit sustainability, housing/local economy, cultural narratives, and immigrant/migrant justice.

Each group was asked to think regionally and identify solutions that could only be achieved through coordinated action across multiple organizations and jurisdictions. They reviewed data, examined challenges and opportunities through a regional Latine lens, and started developing a shared analysis about root causes and systemic barriers. Each group produced preliminary recommendations and key action items to address persistent inequities while building regional political and economic power for Latine communities. *See Appendix 1 for a full summary.*

### Working Groups Summary

Working Group	Key Action Items
<i>Nonprofit Sustainability: Building Resilience in Crisis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build internal readiness through organizational assessments, updated bylaws, and consulting with legal counsel</li> <li>• Shift toward trust-based and collective philanthropy models</li> <li>• Advance mutual aid and cross-organizational transparency</li> <li>• Center civic engagement in long-term strategies</li> </ul>
<i>Housing and Local Economy: Community-Led Solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Latine representation in Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA), Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG), and local planning processes</li> <li>• Limit corporate ownership of single-family homes</li> <li>• Implement policies, including tax and community opportunity to purchase acts, to support community ownership</li> <li>• Address how immigration status affects housing mobility and wealth-building</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural Narratives: Strategy Beyond Storytelling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in narrative creation rather than correction</li> <li>• Build regional cultural power infrastructure with a 30- to 50-year timeline</li> <li>• Embed culture into civic, education, and economic systems</li> </ul>

<i>Immigrant and Migrant Justice: Coordinated Protection and Power</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in legal aid organizations and legal services</li> <li>• Streamline resource sharing and overall regional coordination</li> <li>• Maintain and expand rapid response hotlines and sanctuary policies</li> <li>• Invest in the leadership development of young people to be “powerful people” and “future leaders”</li> <li>• Preserve and expand organizing capacity, door knocking, base building, and community defense</li> <li>• Align and coordinate at the mayoral level on a response to mass immigration raids that centers the community</li> </ul>
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## Multi-Sector Partnership: Aligning the Region for Impact

The closing panel brought together philanthropy, government, and community leadership to discuss regional collaboration, needs, and the path forward. Moderated by Fred Blackwell (San Francisco Foundation), it featured San Francisco Supervisor Myrna Melgar, Oakland Mayor Barbara Lee, Dr. Sandra Hernández (California Health Care Foundation), and Julián Castro (Latino Community Foundation). Panelists emphasized that sustainable solutions required regional coordination across all sectors. Each discussed their constraints, opportunities, and commitments to help build the understanding necessary for effective partnerships.

### *Five key themes emerged:*

1. **The intersectionality of issues requires a coordinated response.** Housing, immigration, education, and economic challenges are deeply interconnected and cannot be solved in isolation.
2. **Use a social determinants of health approach for community investment:** Addressing root causes like poverty, housing instability, and lack of educational opportunities directly impacts community health and well-being.
3. **Simultaneous resistance and building strategies:** Communities must defend against harmful policies and attacks while building long-term power and infrastructure.
4. **Focus on next-generation leadership development:** Investing in Gen Z and Alpha generation leaders to ensure sustainable community power.
5. **Community self-determination and power building:** Latine communities must control their own narratives, resources, and decision-making processes.

## The Path Forward: Sustaining Regional Momentum

Throughout the day, participants stressed that working across county lines and organizational boundaries is essential for addressing challenges that transcend any single jurisdiction. The path forward requires what Julián Castro called “the main recipe for success”: continued planning, strategizing, and committing to action across all sectors. These calls to action form a bold and practical roadmap for turning the convening’s insights into real impact. Each sector’s action items build on its unique strengths while addressing the challenges surfaced in discussions. See *Appendix 2 for recommendations*. The convening closed with a powerful mandate: sustained collaboration across all sectors is urgent. Together, we can meet today’s challenges and unlock the full potential of regional coordination.

This first Latine Regional Convening established the foundation for sustained regional power building that can transform outcomes for more than one million Bay Area Latine residents. Tailoring strategies to address Latine communities' unique challenges will help create equitable and effective solutions. This strengthens systems for everyone, building a Bay Area where opportunity is truly universal.

Many participants noted the clear need for ongoing regional coordination and leadership to support regular regional gatherings, shared resource databases, and coordinated advocacy on regional, state, and federal policy priorities. Several members of the Latine Kitchen Cabinet expressed a desire to explore how to fill this need and institutionalize the collaborative spirit and strategic focus demonstrated on May 29, 2025.

*"We are not here to dictate, but to dream." — Convening participant*

## Acknowledgements

The San Francisco Foundation's Latine Kitchen Cabinet members for their passion, support, and vision in creating this space for the community. [Current Roster](#) and [One Pager](#).

The Latino Community Foundation and Julián Castro for their collaboration and partnership.

San Francisco Foundation CEO Fred Blackwell, CIO Judith Bell, former Board chair Bob Friedman, and Board Trustee Sergio Garcia for their ongoing support and leadership.

Thank you to the following foundations for their support: San Francisco Foundation, Latino Community Foundation, California Health Care Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

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We are deeply grateful to the following leaders for sharing their expertise and vision.

- **Community of Philanthropy:** Fred Blackwell, *CEO, San Francisco Foundation*, Julián Castro, *CEO, Latino Community Foundation*
- **Latine Data Dashboard:** Dr. Cristina Mora, *Co-Director, UC Berkeley, Institute of Governmental Studies Faculty Board Member, UC Berkeley Latinx Research Center*; Dr. Nicolas Vargas, *Associate Professor of Chicana/Latinx Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies. Co-leader, Faculty Co-Director of the UCB Latino Social Science Pipeline Initiative*
- **Housing & Local Economy:** Rita Mancera, *ED, Puente de la Costa Sur (moderator)*, José A. Quiñonez, *Founder, Mission Asset Fund*, Carlo Gomez Arteaga, *Co-ED, SF Transgender District*, Omar Carrera, *ED, Canal Alliance*
- **Immigration & Migrant Justice:** Lariza Dugan Cuadra, *ED, CARECEN SF (moderator)*, Monique Berlanga, *ED, Centro Legal de la Raza*, Marivel Mendoza Matheu, *ED, Hijas del Campo*
- **Nonprofit Sector Sustainability:** Guillermo Meyer, *ED, Public Advocates*, Christian Arana, *VP of Civic Power and Policy, Latino Community Foundation*, Gilda Gonzalez, *Planned Parenthood Northern California*; Sergio Garcia, *Trustee, San Francisco Foundation*.
- **Narrative Change:** Ani Rivera, *ED, Galería de la Raza (moderator)*, Alexis Terrazas, *Director of Programming, Renaissance Journalism Center*, Favianna Rodriguez, *Artist/Cultural Strategist*
- **Closing Plenary:** Fred Blackwell, *CEO, San Francisco Foundation (moderator)*, Mayor Barbara Lee, *Mayor of Oakland*, Supervisor Myrna Melgar, *San Francisco Board of Supervisors*, Dr. Sandra Hernandez, *CEO, California Health Care Foundation*, Julián Castro, *CEO, Latino Community Foundation*



## Appendix 1: Regional Strategic Priorities: Cross-Sector Solutions

Following the data presentation, participants were divided into four working group sessions to dig deep into four critical issue areas affecting Latine communities across the Bay Area.

- Nonprofit sustainability,
- Housing/local economy,
- Cultural narratives, and
- Immigrant/migrant justice

Each working group's mandate was to think regionally and strategically, identifying solutions that could only be achieved through coordinated action across multiple organizations and jurisdictions. The sessions were designed to move participants beyond their individual organizational mandates toward collective problem-solving.

*“We ourselves, individually or as organizations, cannot do everything—but together we can.” — José A. Quiñonez, Mission Asset Fund*

Each working group started reviewing disaggregated data specific to its focus area, examining challenges and opportunities through a regional Latine lens, and developing a shared analysis about root causes and systemic barriers. Participants identified some strategies and key action items to address persistent inequities while building regional political and economic power for Latine communities.

Below is a high-level summary of the discussion, recommendations, and action items.

### Nonprofit Sustainability: Building Resilience in Crisis

The nonprofit sustainability working group confronted a sustainability crisis facing Latine-serving organizations across the region. With California's \$10 billion budget deficit threatening state funding streams and federal policy changes potentially targeting 501(c)(3) organizations, participants recognized that traditional approaches to organizational sustainability were insufficient. The session acknowledged that many Latine-led organizations operate with minimal reserves and depend heavily on government contracts and foundation grants that could disappear rapidly. This vulnerability threatened individual organizations and risked dismantling decades of community-building infrastructure precisely when it was most needed to protect vulnerable populations.

*“All of this work is hard, and there's no silver bullet. You have to try everything... there's no such thing as sacred cows in moments like this.” — Gilda Gonzalez, former President/CEO of Planned Parenthood Northern California*

With California's looming financial and legal challenges to 501(c)(3) organizations, Christian Arana (Latino Community Foundation) moderated discussions on comprehensive strategies for organizational survival and sector-wide collaboration.

#### *Key Action Items:*

- Build internal readiness through organizational assessments, updated bylaws, and consulting with legal counsel

- Shift toward trust-based and collective philanthropy models
- Advance mutual aid and cross-organizational transparency
- Center civic engagement in long-term strategies

## Housing and Local Economy: Community-Led Solutions

The housing and local economy working group tackled what many participants identified as the most pressing threat to the Latine community's stability in the Bay Area. Rising housing costs are not merely inconveniencing families but fundamentally altering the demographic composition of historically Latine neighborhoods and displacing multigenerational communities. The group recognized that traditional affordable housing approaches, while necessary, were insufficient to counter market forces that consistently prioritized profit over community stability. This led to discussions about alternative ownership models, community land trusts, and cooperative housing structures that could provide permanent affordability while building community wealth rather than extracting it.

*“We need to protect the people that are in our communities.” — Omar Carrera, Canal Alliance*

Rita Mancera (PUENTE de la Costa Sur) moderated discussions on regional priorities: flexible and equitable capital for community-owned housing; political and structural power for Latine communities in regional governance; and policy innovation and ownership reform. Participants emphasized the need for a “flexible capital stack to compete for land opportunities and acquisitions in the open market.” They called for alternative capital models, including community syndicates, philanthropic matches, and Latine-led venture fund investors.

### *Key Action Items:*

- Strengthen Latine representation in Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA), Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG), and local planning processes
- Limit corporate ownership of single-family homes
- Implement policies, including tax and community opportunity to purchase acts to support community ownership
- Address how immigration status affects housing mobility and wealth-building

## Cultural Narratives: Strategy Beyond Storytelling

The cultural narratives working group asserted that political and economic power ultimately depends on cultural power—the ability to shape how communities understand themselves and how others perceive them. Participants distinguished between defensive narrative work that responds to negative stereotypes and proactive narrative creation that establishes new frameworks for understanding Latine communities' contributions and aspirations.

*“Nothing moves without culture.” — Breakout participant*

Moderated by Ani Rivera, this session positioned culture as a prerequisite to political power. “Culture shapes imagination, identity, and social norms that influence policy and systems change,” one participant noted. The session distinguished between narrative correction and

narrative justice, emphasizing the need for the Latine community to “create bold, community-rooted narratives that reflect diverse, authentic, intersectional stories.” The group recognized that authentic community narratives were filtered through external perspectives, often emphasizing deficit-based storylines rather than asset-based realities.

#### *Key Action Items:*

- Invest in narrative creation rather than correction
- Build regional cultural power infrastructure with a 30–50-year timeline
- Embed culture into civic, education, and economic systems

## **Immigrant and Migrant Justice: Coordinated Protection and Power**

The immigrant and migrant justice working group confronted the reality that legal aid organizations were managing impossible caseloads. In contrast, community-based organizations struggled to provide comprehensive support services with inadequate resources. The group recognized that individual organizational responses, however well-intentioned, could not match the scale and coordination of federal immigration enforcement efforts. This necessitated regional coordination that could pool resources, share expertise, and create rapid response networks capable of protecting community members regardless of which county they lived in or which organization they initially contacted for help.

*“This is our calling, it's our time to double down, it's our moment to fight.” — Lariza Dugan Cuadra, CARECEN*

Lariza Dugan Cuadra moderated discussions addressing the crisis facing legal aid organizations, which are managing crushing caseloads (400 cases per attorney) while community-based organizations remain “underfunded, understaffed, and stretched thin.” Participants highlighted successful models such as Alameda County Immigration Legal and Education Partnership (ACILEP) and Alameda County United in Defense of Immigrant Rights (ACUDIR), coordinating rapid response hotlines, leading know-your-rights workshops, and organizing communities. Strategic coordination is essential to achieving outcomes like “winning 89% of cases when individuals are connected to attorneys.”

#### *Key Action Items:*

- Invest in legal aid organizations
- Streamlined resource sharing and coordinated door-knocking efforts
- Maintain rapid response hotlines and sanctuary policies
- Train students as “powerful people” and “future leaders”
- Preserve organizing capacity while expanding legal services
- Mayors in the region to align and coordinate on a response that centers on the community
- Overall regional coordination

## Appendix 2: Regional Coordination for Regional Solutions

### For Community Partners and Nonprofit Organizations

*“There was a lot of power in the room. And expertise. I think now more than ever, we need to make sure that we are in lockstep.” — Guillermo Mayer, Public Advocates*

#### Key Action Items:

- Implement organizational readiness plans, including legal preparedness and financial transparency.
- Commit to resource sharing and cross-organizational collaboration, moving beyond competitive mindsets.
- Integrate civic engagement and electoral strategy, focusing on the 2026 midterm elections.
- Develop regional cultural narrative infrastructure with a long-term vision.
- Strengthen coordination of immigrant protection services and Know Your Rights.

### For Philanthropic Partners

*“We can’t keep going back to our theories of change and our impact frameworks. We have to reimagine.” — Raquel Jacquez Sharpe, Blue Shield of California*

#### Key Action Items

- Accelerate trust-based philanthropy models, including gift-based funding, to reduce compliance burdens.
- Support regional coordination through pooled funding mechanisms and joint initiatives.
- Invest in political and structural power-building infrastructure within Latine communities.
- Fund flexible capital solutions for community-controlled housing and tenant protection.
- Support long-term, power-building (e.g., community-led media and narrative creation).

### For Elected Officials and Government Partners

*“Ultimately, to me, one of the main recommendations has to be around power building because if there is not that political will, then I just don’t see how we can scale any of our fabulous ideas.” — Maria Noel Fernandez, Working Partnerships USA.*

#### Key Action Items:

- Strengthen Latine representation in regional governance bodies, including BAHFA, MTC/ABAG, and local planning processes.
- Share housing resources regionally rather than competing between jurisdictions, for example, through coordinated funding streams, cross-jurisdictional housing programs, and regional homelessness responses.
- Maintain/strengthen sanctuary policies while coordinating regional rapid response systems in light of ICE raids and possible military deployment.
- Invest in a green and tech jobs pipeline in environmental justice communities.
- Prepare comprehensive 2030 Census outreach, ensuring Latine residents are counted.
- Direct resources to serving organizations to the priorities outlined under the breakout session above.
- Elected officials need to take a public stance to protect their constituents.