



National
Urban League

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2030

LESSONS FROM THE 2020 CENSUS

MAKE BLACK COUNT





**National
Urban League**

Acknowledgement:

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CO-CHAIR OF THE CENSUS BLACK ROUNDTABLE

“
These fights are imperative to ensure that our children and their children have access to the power that our community rightly deserves.



Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League



Melanie L. Campbell
President/CEO, National Coalition on
Black Civic Participation and Co-Chair
of the Census Black Roundtable

It has been a pleasure working with all of our Make Black Count partners on the 2020 Census.

The U.S. census is, and always has been, about power — and who gets to wield it. The census is also one of the primary ways that we can ensure fair and equitable political representation and civil rights protections under the law, with housing, voting rights, and education among them.

Although the census count has concluded, census professionals transmitted apportionment data to President Biden on late April and now are working on more complete data to deliver to Congress in the Fall. Given the concerns of many stakeholders regarding 2020 Census-data accuracy, the National Urban League wanted to share with you specific overall observations that we have made, covering a range of priority census concerns.

This report is a record of how Make Black Count mobilized, pivoted, and battled in court, online, and on the streets to ensure that our voices would not be silenced by misinformation, intimidation, or dirty tricks during the 2020 Census.

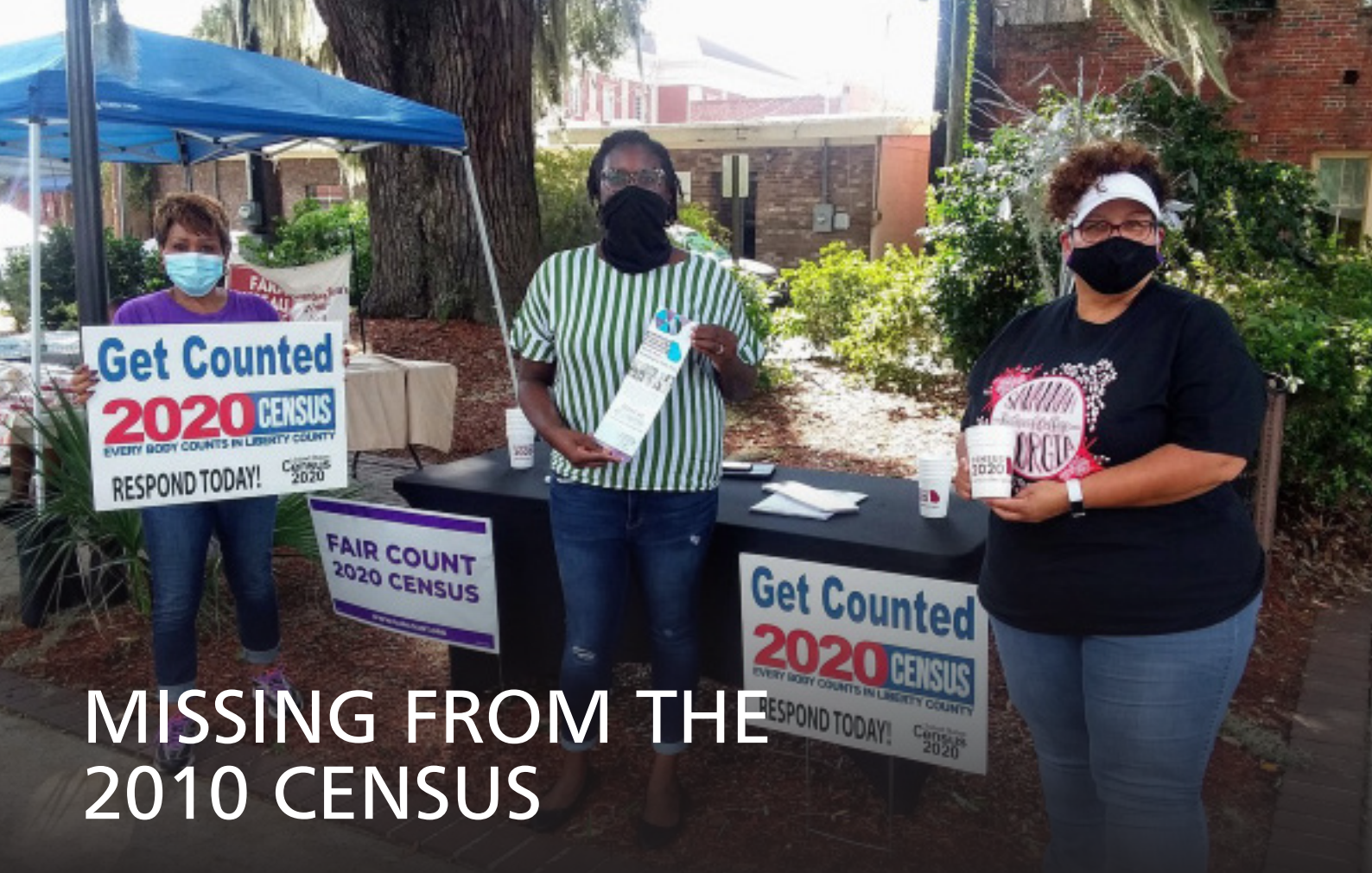
The National Urban League has a 50-year legacy of census advocacy, including my appointment as Chair of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee under former President Obama’s Department of Commerce and my current service on the Census Bureau’s National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations.

Further, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation has served as a national partner with the U. S. Census Bureau over the past 40 years and was delighted to serve as the co-chair for the NUL’s Census Black Roundtable. The NUL and NCBCP believe in the power of coalition and believe that our partnership helped to ensure Black-led organizations worked closer together to ensure the Black population was counted fairly in the 2020 Decennial Census.

In Solidarity,

Marc Morial

Melanie L. Campbell



MISSING FROM THE 2010 CENSUS



15.6%

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

The Omission rate for Black males age 18–49 was very high –15.6% – meaning almost 8% of all African American males in this age group were undercounted.



9.3%

BLACK POPULATION

Overall, 9.3 percent of the Black population was completely missed (omission rate) in the census, based on the Census Bureau’s post 2010 census Demographic Analysis.



6.3%

BLACK CHILDREN

6.3 percent of black children were not counted.



Historically, Black people have been undercounted in the census. Over the past 60 years, census accuracy has steadily improved, but some groups still experience higher undercounts and omissions from the census than others. These include racial and ethnic minority groups, immigrants, single-parent households, renters, mobile young adults, people displaced by natural disasters, and the formerly incarcerated.



ORGANIZING A MOVEMENT



1970

make black count



I PLEDGE TO BE COUNTED.

I will be counted in the 2020 Census to ensure my community gets the representation and funding due to us over the next ten years.

REPOST THIS TO AMPLIFY IN OUR COMMUNITY!

Pledge to Be Counted Text "2020" to 52886



#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT



2020



Black people in the U.S. have been historically underrepresented in national population counts, beginning with the Three-Fifths Compromise dating back to 1787, when we were each deliberately counted as three-fifths of a person.”

Andrea Custis

President and CEO of The Urban League of Philadelphia

The fight for a fair and accurate count has many layers: ensuring that there are sufficient and equitable resources spent to complete the count; preventing politics from creeping into the count; and, of course, convincing residents to actually complete the census.

“What’s in it for you?” became standard messaging to the Black community. But pitch needed to become more inclusive and more granular during the 2020 Census. We began developing strategies to ensure that African Americans understood that political power and representation were at stake, and that we could not afford to lose an inch of political ground by ignoring the census.

It was also important to remember that “Black America” comprises immigrants from both Africa and the Caribbean, as well as those African Americans who, with predictable and unfortunate regularity, have been undercounted since the first census in 1790, and who are still undercounted to this day.

“Black people in the U.S. have been historically underrepresented in national population counts, beginning with the Three-Fifths Compromise dating back to 1787, when we were each deliberately counted as three-fifths of a person,” said Andrea Custis, president and CEO of The Urban League of Philadelphia. “Our erasure resulted in the advancement of a political system that was designed to oppress us and has continued to operate on an unequal distribution of political representation. As a result of undercounting, communities — often communities of color — miss out on their fair share of essential resources, which further perpetuates their oppression.”

An undercount can stunt the growth and development of the most vulnerable in our communities, from children and seniors, to people experiencing homelessness, immigrants, and those among us who rely on government-funded assistance.



To help communities understand the significance of being counted, we held panel discussions about the importance of the Census Bureau getting the count right because mistakes have monetary and social repercussions lasting through the decade and beyond. Our efforts also focused on outreach and education about specific issues, such as the practice of prison-based gerrymandering, which counts prisoners as residents of the communities where they are incarcerated rather than as members of communities where they live.

We explained how the estimated annual \$1.2 trillion draw-down of federal funds — based on and allocated to states, counties, and cities using census data — would expand to over six trillion dollars until next decennial count in 2030. What is more difficult to quantify and qualify over that span is the impact of the loss of a family’s home, food insecurity, or lack of access to medical care.

Naturally, there was still skepticism because the funding coming home didn’t mean that their lives changed. This was particularly true in gentrifying neighborhoods where longtime residents were either pushed out or struggled to afford to stay in their own communities.

To help overcome skepticism, outreach also focused on getting people hired to help canvass their own communities. This would allow local residents to be the ones knocking on the doors of peers and neighbors who would see them as trusted voices.



In 1970, for instance, Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D-NY) joined the Census Bureau as a census taker to help count parts of Brooklyn. Her role helped show that the census could benefit communities simply by counting the people who lived in them. As the first Black woman elected to Congress, Chisholm understood that being counted was key to maintaining our voice in America's democracy.

The threat to our voice and power remains just as strong today, which led to the Make Black Count coalition.

Make Black Count, 2020

The National Urban League understood the significance of the need for an accurate count in Black America, and in 1970, launched the first Make Black Count campaign alongside a coalition of civil rights organizations.

A half century later, the 2020 Census Black Roundtable was co-convened by the National Urban League President and CEO, Marc H. Morial, and The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation President and CEO and Convener of the Black Women's Roundtable Intergenerational Public Policy Network, Melanie L. Campbell. The Roundtable was established to organize and strategize with Black-led and Black-serving institutions at the national level. It also provided space and resources for leaders to get ahead of the many obstacles that threatened an accurate count of Black people.

Some 2020 Census challenges included closing the digital divide for rural and poor Black communities; and ensuring an accurate count of young Black children, Black men, and those who were incarcerated during the decennial census count. We also needed to reach Black immigrants across the diaspora. **Here is a short list of our initial goals:**

- 1 Educate the historically undercounted about the 2020 Census and its importance.
- 2 Assure the Black community of the confidentiality, safety, and security of their personal information.
- 3 Encourage self-response online, by phone, or by mail.
- 4 Educate Black communities about the process for responding to the census and encourage them to cooperate with enumerators.
- 5 Reach traditionally low-response and historically undercounted communities.

Our Partners

Congressional Black Caucus
Foundation

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

National Council of Negro Women,
Inc.

Color of Change

Black Voters Matter Fund

Fair Count

Sigma Pi Phi (The Boule)

African American Mayors Association

National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People

United States Black Chamber

YWCA USANational Black Child
Development Institute

National Association of Black
Journalists

NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Howard University

Black Alliance for Just Immigration

Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights
Under the Law

The National Coalition on Black Civic
Participation

National Action Network

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Joint Center for Political and
Economic Studies

Skinner Leadership Institute

Institute of Caribbean Studies

National Redistricting Foundation

The Haitian Roundtable

Urban League Affiliates

Southern Echo,

First Baptist Church in East Elmhurst,
Patrick Young (Pastor)





EXECUTING THE STRATEGY

4 WAYS TO COMPLETE YOUR CENSUS

- #1: Internet Self Response
- #2: Over the Phone
- #3: Complete Paper Form and Mail Back
- #4: Visit from Census Bureau (Enumerator)

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT

MULTIPLE FAMILIES LIVING IN ONE HOUSE
Complete the 2020 Census Questionnaire Together.

There is only one form per house. Everyone residing in the house on April 1, 2020 should be counted.

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT

APRIL 1, 2020. IT'S CENSUS DAY!
Don't forget to Submit your form to be Counted.

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT

I PLEDGE TO BE COUNTED.
I will be counted in the 2020 Census to ensure my community gets the representation and funding due to us over the next ten years.

REPOST THIS TO AMPLIFY IN OUR COMMUNITY!
Pledge to Be Counted Text "2020" to 52886

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT

BECOME A 2020 CENSUS AMBASSADOR!
Join Your Local Complete Count Committee.

Find a Complete Count Committee in your area.

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT

10 QUESTIONS IN 10 MINUTES
Benefits Your Community for 10 YEARS

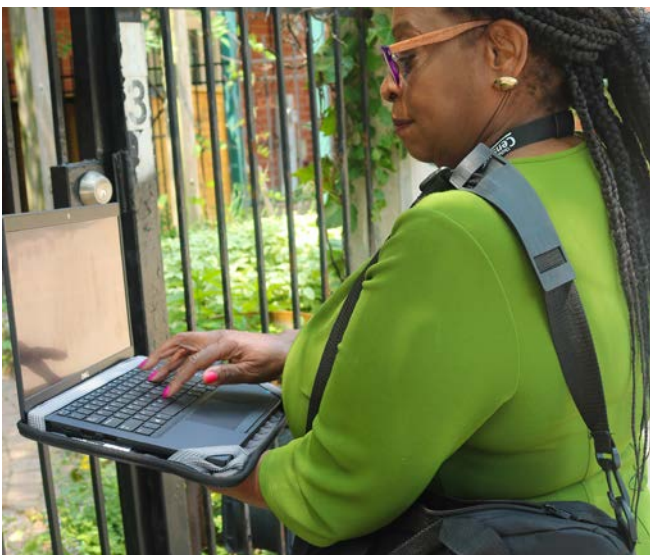
Why You Should Care

#2020CENSUS #MAKEBLACKCOUNT



A Threat to Democracy

Heading into the 2020 Census campaign, we knew that racial and political polarization of our society threatened the essence of our representational democracy. Distrust of government remained historically high as the 2020 Presidential election neared. Hostility toward immigrants, emanating from the highest offices in the land, created a climate of fear, inhibiting people from responding. It was essential to build partnerships with groups like the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, which educates and engages African American and Black immigrant communities to organize and advocate for racial, social, and economic justice.



TELE-TOWN HALL
2020 CENSUS

OBTAINING FEDERAL JOBS TO ENSURE A COMPLETE COUNT

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 500,000 CENSUS JOBS TO BE FILLED. JOIN US IN ENSURING THAT MEMBERS FROM OUR COMMUNITIES ARE APPLYING AT THE HIGHEST RATES TO ENSURE A FAIR AND COMPLETE COUNT.

Derrick Johnson
NAACP President
and CEO

Alexis Anderson-Reed
State Voices Executive
Director

Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton
Senior Pastor of Changing a
Generation Full Gospel
Baptist Church

Marilyn Sanders
Chicago Regional Director
US Census Bureau

Jamal Watkins
NAACP Vice President
of Civic Engagement

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21 8:30 PM ET
Participant Dial-in: 866-757-0756

Key Messages, Outreach, and Education

Heading into the 2020 Census campaign, we knew that racial and political polarization of our society threatened the essence of our representational democracy. Distrust of government remained historically high as the 2020 Presidential election neared. Hostility toward immigrants, emanating from the highest offices in the land, created a climate of fear, inhibiting people from responding. It was essential to build partnerships with groups like the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, which educates and engages African American and Black immigrant communities to organize and advocate for racial, social, and economic justice.



Why the Census Matters

The National Urban League and its affiliate network rely on census data to guide the provision of direct services to communities in the areas of education, health care, housing, jobs, and justice, for the more than two-million people served nationwide. Census data informs the National Urban League's national voting rights' advocacy, and its Washington Bureau's research, policy, and Congressional outreach. The National Urban League's annual State of Black America report relies heavily on census data to assess the condition and quality of life for Black Americans each year.



We have known from the beginning that the addition of a citizenship question was a blatant ploy to reduce minority participation and rob communities of their political power."

Marc Morial

Data from the United States Census is at the very heart of American representative democracy, and has been ever since the census was ratified as part of the U.S. Constitution in 1788.

Population data from the census is used to apportion political representation at all levels of government including: Federal House of Representatives census population counts are used to determine how many of the 435 seats in the U.S. House each state receives.

Based on the initial population data from 2020, New York will lose one seat in the House of Representatives — just 89 residents short of keeping all of its seats. The Empire State's delegation will shrink from 27 to 26 as a result of the 2020 census, officials said. Fewer than 100 people was the difference in keeping or losing an additional representative. A total of 13 states gained or lost seats in the 2020 Census count.

State Legislative Seats are drawn for state legislative and Senatorial districts using census data.

Local Government Cities and towns use census data to draw internal political boundaries (i.e., wards and districts).

The federal government uses census data to distribute funding to meet local needs.

The richness of census data allows the federal government to distribute funding for some of the country's most critical social programs directly toward those people with greatest need.

Businesses use census data to make informed decisions about local and neighborhood investments and overall development—housing, retail, manufacturing and otherwise...i.e., locating Amazon facilities, new homes, grocery stores in food deserts, sports arenas, restaurants, etc.

Citizenship

Heading into the 2020 Census campaign, we knew that racial and political polarization of our society threatened the essence of our representational democracy. Distrust of government remained historically high as the 2020 Presidential election neared. Hostility toward immigrants, emanating from the highest offices in the land, created a climate of fear inhibiting people from responding.

The nation, and our coalition, was drawn into the debate about whether a citizenship question would be added to the 2020 Census. Early in the Trump administration, senior officials discussed bringing back a controversial question topic that has not been included in the census for all households since 1950—U.S. citizenship status.

Once the question (“Is this person a citizen of the United States?”) was approved by the administration, our coalition filed a “friend of the court” brief opposing it. The issue went all the way to the Supreme Court.

Days after Supreme Court arguments on the citizenship question, news emerged that a political consultant who played a crucial role in the decision to add the question had authored a study concluding that adding the question would allow the drafting of extremely gerrymandered Congressional maps to drain even more influence away from urban communities and communities of color.

Morial, who served as chair of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee, told Congress that the citizenship question was one of several potential problems that could produce a significant undercount of Black Americans, including underfunding, understaffing, and the practice of prison-based gerrymandering. Incarcerated persons are counted in jurisdictions of the communities where they are imprisoned rather than in the communities where they live. This represents a massive transfer of political power and federal funding from urban districts of color to rural, prison hosting, predominantly white districts for programs like Head Start, Medicare, free and reduced lunch programs, and transportation infrastructure.

“We have known from the beginning that the addition of a citizenship question was a blatant ploy to reduce minority participation and rob communities of their political power,” Morial said.

Is this person a citizen of the United States?

- Yes, born in the United States
- Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas
- Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents
- Yes, U.S. citizen by parent or parents
- Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization - *Print year naturalization*
- No, not a U.S citizen

Focus on Immigrants

Nana Gyamfi, Executive Director, BAJI

Why did you join the roundtable?

We work at the intersection of race and immigration. Being able to be part of the Black Census Roundtable allowed us to operate in the space where the diaspora was united. Sometimes it can feel a little awkward because people are not used to thinking about the immigrant experience. That was not the case with the roundtable. They included us, not in a token type of way, but in the fabric of Black folks in the United States. This gave us the opportunity to connect with policymakers who may not have thought about Black immigrants on their own. The work enabled us to ignite some of the energy of Black migrants regardless of citizenship because the census is a way to participate in democracy without voting.

What were your biggest challenges?

People are hesitant normally. They don't want people in their business. That's the cultural experience of being too often the victim of government intrusion. It was heightened because all migrants were targeted by the Trump administration for deportation. People who were naturalized were getting letters questioning their status so we had to do a lot of work. We printed materials in languages including Amharic, Somali, French, and Haitian Creole. We hosted seminars and we got involved in litigation over counting immigrants and stopping the count early. We had to make sure that Black immigrants were counted. We hosted seminars and we got involved in litigation



over counting immigrants and stopping the count early. We had to make sure that Black immigrants were counted.

How did you deal with the pandemic?

Like everyone else, we had to move operations to virtual. We started phone banking and text banking and we had to build out a team so we could reach people on Instagram and Facebook. We went from the streets to the internet. We had to learn as we went.

Was the 2020 Census experience a success?

It was fabulous. We have never been involved with the census at the regional and national level. We started in 2006 and didn't have a full team until 2010. The work we did on the census.



“Despite the positive changes we have made throughout history, there is a persistent trend of bad actors playing politics with the survey in order to disenfranchise racial minorities. We see a present-day example of this type of bad faith provision in the 2018 announcement that the Department of Commerce planned to add a citizenship question to the census. There was no valid reason for this proposal other than a concerted effort to suppress the response rate of minorities and new immigrants.”

Congressman William Lacy Clay



National
Urban League

MASTERING THE PIVOT



Years of planning and momentum building toward the 2020 Census came to an abrupt halt in March of 2020. Our messages about the importance of the census suddenly became stale. Our tactics and planned events were all cancelled. Venues—schools, houses of worship, sporting events at all levels—all shut down. Even Times Square felt deserted. Roads and trains and planes typically packed with people came to a standstill. Everyone, including the Make Black Count Campaign, needed to pivot. Dates that had been set in stone were suddenly fluid and liable to change without notice. Large swaths of the nation went into survival mode.

The number of people needing food and other services increased all over the nation. Partners, including the National Action Network, BAJI, and NUL affiliates, rushed in to help. From March 13, 2020 to March 13, 2021, for instance, the Louisville Urban League served 2,473 new clients and made more than 500 in-person visits to students' homes (delivering essential supplies, books, school supplies, support services, etc.), weekly virtual instruction and orientation hours, and assistance for crisis situations. During that same period, they hosted ten COVID-19 Free testing events and sent 85,000 text messages with COVID-19 testing and vaccination information.

And then it all stopped. More than three years of planning events and outreach activities came to a screeching halt.



“Our communities understand struggle and always have,” said Jeri Green, a census expert and NUL consultant for the Make Black Count Campaign. “Suddenly, we went from saying ‘don’t forget the census,’ to ‘be safe, wear your masks, and use hand sanitizer.’ The messaging had to change because people’s lives had changed so dramatically. Nobody was on the street. It was all digital and we had to learn how to live in that world.”

With communities shutting down nearly every kind of gathering, and residents—who could—hunkered down, the first order of business was safety. Getting enough sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, and masks for workers was essential. At the same time, all messaging had to be tweaked. The new messaging had to take a back seat to safety, as people struggled to get personal protective equipment, including masks. Flyers now came with hand sanitizers. Census information was slipped into boxes of food at popup food giveaways. As civil unrest spread around the killing of George Floyd, the Census Bureau stopped operations.



FAIR COUNT: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

As an organization whose strength is its field operations, it's no understatement to say COVID-19 upended everything we did. Social distancing halted in-person events, live census-response gathering, and the Census in the South Bus Tour. Closer to home, Fair Count's Atlanta offices were closed to the public and staff began teleworking.





The communities where we'd most heavily invested resources and person-power were the same that were disproportionately suffering from—and in too many cases dying from—the rapidly spreading illness. Albany, Georgia, the hub of our southwest strategy, became the highest per-capita COVID hotspot in the nation at a time when very little was known about the virus. Large numbers of LatinX farmworkers and poultry plant laborers were forced to work in direct contact with others, without masks, as their employers refused to take basic health precautions. Schools closed and food delivery became a necessity for families experiencing scarcity. And faith communities, particularly in rural areas, struggled to make the tough decision to go online rather than have in-person services.

It no longer made sense, using the lens of long-term power-building, to keep simply asking members of these communities to complete their census surveys. Our entire organizing philosophy, budgeted expenditures, and approach to community outreach had to change.

So they did.

Adapting with incredible speed, we sought to make the census part of the solution. With greater need, our organizing philosophy shifted. We married our mission with providing services that our target communities desperately needed. Fair Count employees and volunteers staffed COVID testing stations, curated flu shot events, and in the most deeply-affected areas, food distribution sites. While helping those in need, we provided on-site census completion opportunities via tablets and laptops. We awarded microgrants to organizations on the ground already offering relief and asked that census promotion be worked into their existing efforts.

Hanging Fair Count literature on doors replaced conversing with residents at their doors. We distributed more than 30,000 door hangers in English and Spanish in rural Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, and Kentucky. As the pandemic worsened, we began packaging the door hangers with personal protective equipment (PPE), first distributing PPE kits to those laborers who needed them most, namely poultry plant and farm workers. The kits proved so popular that we enlisted a small army of staff and volunteers to make more, and ultimately, national and Georgia-based teams distributed PPE kits containing a total of more than 400,000 face masks and census/voting information.



National
Urban League

SAVING THE CENSUS AND THE BLACK COUNT



In April 2021, Civil rights groups, civic organizations, and tribal and local governments secured and presented to the court for approval a final resolution in the federal lawsuit that stopped the federal government from severely truncating and skewing the results of the 2020 census.

The Trump administration had sought to cut short both census data-collection and census data-processing to announce incomplete and inaccurate census results before former President Trump's term ended. After a series of favorable rulings in the case *National Urban League v. Ross* (now *National Urban League v. Raimondo*), the Census Bureau was required to continue collecting full data from tens of millions of U.S. residents from September 11 through October 15, 2020. The court prevented the Census Bureau from ending the count on September 30; millions more U.S. residents were counted through the end of the extended data collection period on October 15. And the Census Bureau agreed to continue the data processing period into spring 2021, as sought by plaintiffs, instead of improperly ending it before the Trump administration left office.

Under the terms of the stipulated order to dismiss the lawsuit submitted to the United States District Court for the Northern District of California for approval:

The Census Bureau will include everyone, regardless of citizenship status, in population numbers for congressional apportionment and state-level redistricting. In April 2021, Civil rights groups, civic organizations, and tribal and local governments secured and presented to the court for approval a final resolution in the federal lawsuit that stopped the federal government from severely truncating and skewing the results of the 2020 census.



“Every person deserves to be counted—and we are gratified to have been a part of this remarkable coalition’s critical fight to secure a fair and accurate census for all.”

**Sadik Huseny and Melissa Arbus Sherry
Partners at Latham & Watkins**

The Census Bureau has acknowledged that the “illegal alien” citizenship data it was preparing for former President Trump is statistically unfit for use in apportionment and redistricting.

The Census Bureau will continue, with the assistance of third parties, to assess the data it obtained during the partially truncated data collection period under the Trump administration, and will provide plaintiffs and the public critical information and bi-monthly reports on its reviews of the quality of the 2020 Census data for the next year. The plaintiffs in *National Urban League v. Raimondo* (formerly *National Urban League v. Ross*) are membership and advocacy organizations, counties, cities, federally recognized Indian tribes, and individuals representing a broad swath of U.S. residents, including historically undercounted populations who were most likely to be missed by a rushed census process: communities of color, low-income individuals, undocumented immigrants, residents of Indian reservations, and persons with mental and physical disabilities.

The plaintiffs filed their suit in August 2020 in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California when the Trump administration, against the judgment of the Census Bureau’s expert staff, attempted to drastically shorten the timeline for census data collection and processing efforts during the pandemic.

The suit alleged that the Trump administration’s actions violated the federal Administrative Procedure Act and the U.S. Constitution, and threatened long-term harm in myriad ways, given that census figures are used to reapportion the U.S. House of Representatives, redraw congressional, state, and local electoral districts, and distribute more than \$1.5 trillion annually in federal funds for education, food, healthcare, and other needs. The lawsuit also alleged that the speed-up was designed to facilitate an illegal directive from former President Trump that sought to exclude undocumented immigrants from the congressional apportionment.

“Every person deserves to be counted—and we are gratified to have been a part of this remarkable coalition’s critical fight to secure a fair and accurate



census for all,” said Sadik Huseny and Melissa Arbus Sherry, the partners at Latham & Watkins LLP who jointly led the litigation. “We thank the Department of Justice for its efforts, throughout the last few months, to bring this case to an appropriate resolution. And more than anything, we are immensely thankful for and humbled by the incredible around-the-clock efforts of the court, the court’s chambers, and the many other judges in the district who assisted under intense time pressure to provide the many detailed and thoughtful rulings in this case.”

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit are the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, the League of Women Voters, the Navajo Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, Harris County in Texas, Commissioners Rodney Ellis and Adrian Garcia of the Harris County Commissioners Court, King County in Washington, the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, the cities of San Jose and Salinas (California), and the City of Chicago, Illinois.

The plaintiffs are represented by Latham & Watkins LLP, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the Brennan Center for Justice, and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, among others.



National
Urban League

LOOKING AHEAD

OVERVIEW OF 2020 CENSUS CONCERNS
AND RECOMMENDATION



1 WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN CENSUS MISSION CRITICAL ROLES

The U.S. Census Bureau's mission critical workforce of data scientists, demographers, IT professionals, math and survey statisticians, economists and overall senior-level decision makers, must reflect America's diverse populations who understand (academically and culturally) a changing American society and its needs. The National Urban League's close observation of the census workforce (as former chair, 2010 Census Advisory Committee and current census National Advisory Committee member) is that Black and other persons of color appear to have diminished roles and presence in senior technical and leadership positions (GS-14 and higher) at the Census Bureau. The Bureau collects information on its workforce by grade, division, and race/ethnicity. A close review of this information will provide a clear assessment of the status of the permanent census workforce, levels of inclusivity and gaps in diversity/leadership.

As the Census Bureau makes preparations for the 2030 decennial census planning cycle, diverse leadership is needed on the "front end" of the next census as methodologies and strategies are developed for a post pandemic, accurate count of America and historically undercounted populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Conduct a management review of diversity at the Census Bureau for mission critical technical positions (stated above) to determine program areas where increased diversity in technical and senior managerial positions is needed.

Establish a partnership, including Memorandums of Agreement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to create pathways and a pipeline for hiring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduates at the Census Bureau. This effort should mirror the Census Bureau's successful recruitment and hiring relationship with the Hispanic American Colleges and Universities (HACU) program and incorporate the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the nonprofit organization representing HBCUs.

2 CENSUS LEADERSHIP

Since 1790, when Thomas Jefferson conducted the first census and enslaved Black people were counted as three-fifths of a person, there has never been a person of color who has served as the permanent Director of the Census Bureau. As people of color are comprising a greater share of respondents in census surveys and as indicators of this country's well-being (economic, political, education, health, etc.) must accurately reflect the conditions and characteristics of diverse populations of color, the time has come when the leadership of the Census Bureau must also reflect these needs, sensitivities, and demographic realities.

Further, the Census Bureau's inability to develop effective strategies and methodologies to eliminate the differential undercount and significant omission rate of African Americans in the census count requires leadership that understands the unique needs of historically undercounted populations and solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Appoint a qualified person of color as Director, U.S. Census Bureau, following the statutory guidance of the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011 which requires a new Census Director to "have a demonstrated ability in managing large organizations and experience in the collection, analysis, and use of statistical data." In good faith, the Biden Administration must consider candidates who have a keen understanding of and exposure to historically undercounted race and ethnic population groups and conducted cross-cultural research that considers impacts and implications of public policies on communities of color.

The Biden Administration agreed with our recommendation and nominated the first person of color Robert Santos, as Census Director in the history of the Census (1790). He is awaiting Senate approval.

Consult with broad, diverse audiences on the selection of a Census Director, including the business sector and historically Black colleges and universities.

3 CENSUS DATA QUALITY AND ACCURACY

“The 2020 Census is confronting a perfect storm of adverse circumstances that have led to concern about possible impairment of the quality of the data relative to prior censuses.”

(American Statistical Association, 2020 Census Quality Indicators Task Force [February 2021].)

Currently, statistical organizations, stakeholders, state and local officials, and census observers overall, are concerned about the accuracy of 2020 census data and its fitness for apportionment and redistricting. The National Urban League is particularly concerned about the accuracy and completeness of the Black count—in southern states hit hard by hurricanes, predominantly Black urban jurisdictions (i.e., Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Miami, New York City), and COVID-19 hotspots disproportionately located in Black communities nationwide.

The Census Bureau’s chaotic Covid-19 response and the unprecedented politicization of the census by the former Trump Administration (culminating with the Supreme Court’s decision to end the census abruptly before the count concluded) have created anomalies and deficiencies in the census count. While the National Urban League sees great improvement under the Biden Administration with respect to transparency, the question is whether damage caused by the Trump administration can be rectified.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Compel the Census Bureau to explore all options and methodological strategies to adjust and correct deficiencies in the data to reduce the differential undercount of Black and other racial and ethnic groups and ensure these populations do not lose representation, federal funding (especially in communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19), or Constitutional rights related to redistricting and voting as a result of increased inaccurate data.

Ensure increased transparency and census communication with diverse stakeholders on the usefulness of census data throughout data processing prior to the release of data for apportionment, redistricting and thereafter. Congressional appropriators, state and local officials and the general public need assurances that the data are fit for required constitutional and statutory purposes as well as for federal funding allocations needed to rebuild communities hard hit by the pandemic.

The Census Bureau’s 2020 Census Post Enumeration Survey is currently underway to measure the accuracy of the census, including the agency’s ability to effectively count racial and ethnic groups. Census will publish the results of this study by late 2021/early 2022. This process must be fully supported and transparent so that historically undercounted communities, local, and state officials understand shortcomings and potential challenges they will face (economically, politically, etc.) for the next ten years (until the 2030 census).

Embrace the analysis and recommendations of independent research efforts currently underway by statistical entities (i.e., American Statistical Association) who are examining 2020 Census accuracy, including the usefulness of this data for apportionment and redistricting.

4 DIFFERENTIAL PRIVACY

The Census Bureau's proposed use of Differential Privacy on 2020 Census data is intended to protect respondent data in the face of high-volume big data, faster and more sophisticated technology/data processing software, and third-party data (from social media, credit bureaus, and other sources) that, when combined with census household, data could reveal a person's identity.

The National Urban League joins stakeholders (i.e., the National Redistricting Committee), concerned that the Census Bureau's planned use of differential privacy applications—including altering household characteristics of individuals (i.e., race and age), at various geographies (block level)—will diminish this nation's constitutional mandate to ensure fair and equal political representation for all people. Differential privacy concerns are particularly keen for small and historically undercounted populations who also anticipate a significant 2020 census undercount following the pandemic. The loss of data accuracy due to differential privacy applications, on top of a poor count, requires close weighing of differential privacy/disclosure avoidance options currently being developed by the Census Bureau. Most importantly, privacy protections are paramount to the public's trust of the census process. Similarly, Constitutional provisions that protect fair and equitable political representation for all people are equally important.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure full and broad communication with diverse stakeholders (Congressional Appropriators, "minority caucuses," local and state legislators, redistricting advocates, etc.), on the full complement of differential-privacy options under consideration. A small group of census stakeholders are working with the Census Bureau to understand which differential privacy methods the census will utilize to accomplish privacy objectives. This process has been painstaking, with moderate (opaque) transparency regarding the actual timeline for implementing differential privacy and how much "loss" we should expect regarding data accuracy and the impact (if any) on census redistricting data to be published September 30, 2021.

Maximize opportunities to ensure differential privacy applications reflect the actual population counts in affected geographic areas for racial and ethnic groups. There should be no overall loss of racial and age data for geographic areas when data swapping, "noise," or other disclosure avoidance measures are applied.

Do not rush to apply differential privacy to 2020 Census data sets before the public, including state and local governments, civil rights organizations, and census stakeholders have been apprised of options and communicated with regarding impacts.

Continue to research, test and improve ongoing demonstration products (with stakeholder input), including options that potentially address/resolve systemic biases and issues stakeholders have identified with current demonstration products.

5 BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST AND INCREASING TRANSPARENCY

Rebuilding trust in the census is a daunting task given the politicization of the census process, missed deadlines, data irregularities and inaccuracies, and the overwhelming impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities. Continued outreach, transparency and engagement throughout the decade are essential to this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Create a 2030 Census Advisory Committee of diverse organizations and individuals immediately following the 2020 Census to engage the public and receive input and feedback on 2030 Census planning, research, and methodology.

Create a Data Quality Working Group on the Census Scientific Advisory Committee and the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations.

Engage stakeholders in broader conversations and lessons learned to document 2020 census outreach experiences gleaned from the global pandemic and tumultuous census environment (i.e., wildfires, civil rights protests, hurricanes, and a presidential election).

