



COUNTING ON CHICAGO COALITION NEWSLETTER - WORKING TO ENSURE EQUITY THROUGH A COMPLETE CENSUS COUNT

A SEPTEMBER TO REMEMBER

COCC finishes strong in 2020 Census



LET'S REMEMBER, WE MATTER AND WERE COUNTED! *By Donald Dew*

There are moments in life when we are called to summon all of our strength and fortitude; to find our resolve as we stand at the base of a mountain that we are not sure we can climb.

For everyone in Chicago who is concerned about the vulnerable and the disenfranchised, this moment feels like standing at the foot of a mountain whose peak can't even be seen.

It begins with the health crisis. Black and brown people are disproportionately infected and dying from COVID-19. Across Chicago, 70 percent of all COVID-19 deaths are occurring among African Americans. Long-standing health disparities between racial groups – such as chronic diseases and access to medical care – are now rearing its ugly head in the most tragic way possible.

The health consequences of this pandemic also extend beyond the infected and hospitalized. Isolation and untreated chronic conditions can be just as dangerous. We are doing our best to mitigate the impacts as best we can.

This moment is also an economic crisis and we all know who is enduring its full force: the poor and disadvantaged. It is the Uber drivers and dishwashers, the bell hops, and janitors. These are the people, living paycheck to paycheck, who were already struggling to balance on the shaky tightrope of life inside a fundamentally flawed social system, and now are the most likely to fall off.

In a cruel irony of timing, this all happened at the exact moment of the decennial census on which decisions of funding to human services will be made. Making sure everyone was counted in Illinois was monumentally important. As leader of this great coalition, I am honored that we came together to be a part of this coalition to see that our communities are counted.

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FAMILY ANCESTRY TIES INTO CENSUS

Framing the Census as a Family History Research Tool Expands Outreach to Hard to Count Community Residents



FAMILY ANCESTRY CHALLENGE

When HSI CEO Donald Dew formed the Counting on Chicago Coalition (COCC), he identified four angles of attack to increase 2020 Census participation among the undercounted west and southside Chicago communities in the coalition's service area: faith-based, legislative, education institutions, and community service organizations.

The Coalition decided to make its educational efforts multi-generational in scope. This approach would assist the COCC in its outreach by acknowledging that many middle and high school students were computer savvy enough to assist adult household members with the online questionnaire. Moreover, by framing the census as a useful tool for researching family genealogical histories, the COCC could engage multiple generations in a way that perhaps the "dry and traditional" details of the census's value might not.

Thus, the first Family Ancestry Challenge, an intergenerational virtual learning project that provided participants with genealogy worksheets, research indexes and expert guidance from genealogists through live virtual meetings, was created.

COCC sub-recipient Introspect Youth Services, the lead sponsor of the project, launched three sessions via Zoom in May and early June. Introducing the 50 student participants to the census as a genealogical tool was noted genealogist and founder/CEO of the Center for Black Genealogy Tony Burroughs. Using hand-outs he developed stories of his own ancestry search, Burroughs walked the students through the research tools he'd created that would be the basis of their family research.

The second session of the project featured an interview with venerable Chicago historian Timuel Black, he provided an anecdote-filled look at how he used the census to launch his own family research. The project culminated with video and oral presentations submitted



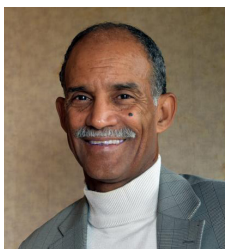
by students who used the materials Burroughs provided



Timuel Black



Dr. Carol Adams



Tony Burroughs



Sharon Morgan

to collect their family histories. Throughout the project, students were encouraged not only to interview their family members,

but to encourage and when necessary, help them complete the census online. Participants were entered into a contest to see who could generate the most online completions. The top three winners were awarded prizes; all of the participants received small tokens of appreciation for their efforts.

More than 50 students from Michelle Clark Magnet High School in Chicago's Austin Community and Lindblom Math and Science Academy in the city's West Englewood Community along with their families were connected through video conferences in the project.

The Family Ancestry Challenge was so successful that a Phase II of the Ancestry Challenge launched in September, coordinated by noted educator and arts historian Dr. Carol Adams, former president of the DuSable Museum of African American history and the current president and CEO of Urban Prescriptives Consulting. Phase II of the Project introduced participants to facilitator Sharon Morgan, who co-wrote "Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade," with a descendant of a family of slave traders and owners.

More than 48 people joined the initial program launch call via Zoom; Introspect recruited an additional 30 student participants. This phase challenged participants to creatively illustrate what they learned about the census' value in family ancestry research using the medium of their choice—video, an oral presentation, or a creative mask design. Their entries were submitted for judging by a panel of experts; the winners will be recognized at a ceremony next month.

Pandemic's Crisis Response Raises Curtain on Census' Importance

In Chicago's undercounted and hard-to-count communities on the south and west sides, multiple pandemics have raged unabated for years. Poverty, violence, low-performing, underfunded schools, inadequate access to healthcare, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness—the legion legacies of systemic racism that have ravaged the physical and mental health of these communities feel almost intractable in their scope.

The nation's decennial population count is one of the main tools used to direct government resources to the areas of greatest need. But when that count is overlaid atop a worldwide health crisis that has claimed the lives of more than 200,000 in the US alone, the challenge to elevate its importance takes on monumental significance. For the Counting on Chicago Coalition sub-recipient agencies working to increase census participation, the health crisis framed how community engagement and education was conducted. Plans made prior to the pandemic's onset were adjusted to reflect a new reality that valued isolation over interaction. Yet despite this, most remained open and accessible and committed to meeting their constituents where they were and integrating census outreach with the pressing issues concerning them.

When the state initially began opening COVID-19 testing centers, west side residents had no convenient testing location. It was only through the aggressive lobbying and support from State Representatives LaShawn K. Ford, Camille Y. Lilly and Illinois State Senator Kimberly A. Lightford that The Loretto Hospital became the first community-focused, no cost, COVID-19 testing site on Chicago's west side. Despite testing and treating hundreds of COVID-19 cases, The Loretto Hospital fell 15 patients short of collecting a high-impact payment from the federal government. These challenge of diminishing resources aside, The Loretto Hospital continues to provide free COVID-19 testing to a community whose residents were disproportionately affected by the virus.

COVID-19 “raised the curtain on the disparities” among populations struggling with substance abuse, homelessness, and mental health

treatment that are completely out of the loop, said Milton Johnson, program coordinator for the Bobby E. Wright Behavioral Health Center (BEW). This population was very receptive to completing the census, he noted, because BEW staff could give them something—swag, food, anything that had any value, they would cooperate in getting signed up. “The census became very personal to me,” added Johnson, who prior to this year described himself as “not a big census person. But then I saw it tie into everything I do. I learned a lot, I saw a lot, it gave me even more desire and inspiration to work harder to save that population of our people that we know about and those we don't know about.”

Distributing literature at free pop-up testing sites, doctor's visits, food giveaways, WIC clinics, and pre-schools, became vehicles for raising the importance of the census for the Sinai Community Institute team. But first, said Angela Brown, the Institute's executive director, they had to overcome their clients' initial fear of contact, and “clean up some of the myths about the census.” Even commiserating with parents about e-Learning snafus became opportunities to talk about the education system and what we need for our families, she said. Those “immediate issue” conversations helped get the message out that we need to have conversations about the census; to have funding schools in our communities and the resources they need, she added.

“There is more than one pandemic,” asserts Rev. Walter Jones, executive director of Fathers Who Care; Black on Black crime is one pandemic, poverty is another pandemic—we've had to respond to all of these issues.” Crucial to the success of their efforts was building up trust in the community and letting residents know that despite whatever was going on, they were loved. Designated essential workers because of their community outreach work in “Deleterious Impact Sites or hot spots,” PPE-clad staff brought used clothing, food, a listening ear, even music to soothe the souls of folks besieged by the virus, crime, substance abuse and mental health issues. Since March, Fathers Who Care has distributed between 1000 and 1500 boxes of food a week. “We get the food and take it to the community. We built up that trust and folks felt comfortable responding to us engaging them with the census.”

The Counting on Chicago Coalition has been a godsend for one local business whose livelihood was threatened when the COVID-19 pandemic effectively dried up 80 percent of her business.

“It was a blessing in disguise for us,” said Vernita Johnson, owner of DLV Printing, 5825 W. Corcoran. “It kept us working—we didn't have to lay off people like I'd planned.”

DLV has been meeting the community's printing needs for a quarter century. Its largest contract was with the Chicago Public Schools printing school uniforms. It was also the go-to printer for families seeking personalized t-shirts for their family reunions, local sports teams' uniforms, and organizations sponsoring events. COVID-19 put the kibosh on all of that.

COCC benefits Saves Local Businesses Spotlight: DLV Printing

Johnson said things looked so bleak that she was seriously looking at which three of her six staff she'd have to lay off. Then along came the COCC.

We printed a lot of things for the COCC—HSI, the NAACP, Bobby Wright, The Answer, Loretto Hospital—so in addition to yard signs, DLV printed ink pens, notebooks, sports bottles, buttons, caps, t-shirts, masks, hoodies, and tote bags, the westside native said.

“I thank God for the Coalition. It was like a godsend for us. I really appreciate them selecting us to do their printing,” she added.

GOSPEL TAKEOVER:

Role of faith-based organizations in increasing the count.



When Donald Dew, HSI's CEO pledged to take a four-pronged approach to increase 2020 Census participation, the faith-based community was one of the first he sought out to specifically target the low-response neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides. In response, faith-based communities across Chicago and the state of Illinois answered the call by banding together to ensure that their communities were counted.

The Counting on Chicago Coalition partnered with Inter-faith leaders across the city developing Census Sunday initiatives meant to encourage their congregations to complete the 2020 census before the September 30 deadline. These initiatives were led by four inter-faith members of the Counting on Chicago Coalition including Pastor Michael Eaddy of the People's Church of the Harvest Church of God in Christ, Father Larry Dowling of St. Agatha's Catholic Church, Pastor John Collins of the Leaders Network and Rev. Walter Jones, Founder and CEO of west side nonprofit Fathers Who Care. The goal was to reach thousands of Chicagoans, including those in "hard-to-count" communities.



On Sunday, September 20, a Census Sunday Gospel Concert was livestreamed in a collaboration between Don Jackson, the Stellar Awards and the National Museum of Gospel Music. This Call to Action event was Emceed by Inspiration 1390 AM's Sonya Blakey and featured performances by Jonathan McReynolds, Vashawn Mitchell, Ricky Dillard, Anita Wilson, Smokey Norful, Kim Stratton and a host of other gospel powerhouses.

While more than 30,000 tuned in virtually on various channels, including the Chicago Defender, there were also a host of interfaith and community leaders as well as elected officials who gathered at Apostolic Faith Church to enjoy the concert in person. Among those lending a voice to the census push were Apostolic Faith Church Pastor Bishop

Horace E. Smith, M.D. and Governor Pritzker.

Participating in the census is "one of the most important things you can engage in this year if not this decade," said Pritzker. "It's time for you to finally get the investment and representation that you deserve."

Other supporters in attendance included Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, Congressman Bobby Rush, Congressman Danny K. Davis, Alderman Jason Ervin and City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin.

"I want to thank this great coalition for giving all of us the opportunity to be a part of it," said Congressman Davis at the gospel concert. "It's been a great effort. We have a little more time to go, but it doesn't matter that the time is short. When the time is short, we speed up."

INTERFAITH LEADERS FROM VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS CONTINUED TO DO CHURCH CHECK-INS AND OUTREACH TO THEIR CONGREGATIONS THROUGH THEIR LITURGY, NEWSLETTERS AND DIRECT APPEALS.

The Counting on Chicago Coalition, in partnership with WVON 1690AM radio personality Pam Morris, engaged gospel radio stations in "takeovers" across the state of Illinois to raise awareness of the census in hopes of increasing

the participation rate. During the final week of the census, interfaith leaders from various denominations continued to do church check-ins and outreach to their congregations through their liturgy, social media and virtual worship services, newsletters and direct appeals.

Statewide Census Director, Marishonta Wilkerson, acknowledged how the partnerships forged in the faith community led to greater awareness and engagement in areas where census participation was a challenge.

"The Counting on Chicago Coalition has provided diverse and creative platforms and events that amplified our census message," said Wilkerson. "The Census Gospel Concert reached tens of thousands while delivering a host of messages of how the census will impact the funding and representation of communities across Chicago for the next decade."

COCC Video truck takes census to the streets.

When your business deals with big crowds, staying afloat during a global pandemic can be dicey. Happily for Thomas Finch, owner of Finch & Associates Audio Visual Consultants, his firm was perfectly positioned to accommodate the outreach pivot that the Counting on Chicago Coalition had to make to fulfill its charge.

His firm supplied the video trucks displaying census messaging that for the past few months were regular sights around west and south side communities. The work couldn't have come at a more opportune time, Finch said. One hundred percent of the events his business relied on were cancelled. "Finch was in a pinch, and the Counting on Chicago Coalition helped me out. It kept my guys going and kept the checks coming."

If you've celebrated a professional sports team's championship win at Grant Park, attended an outdoor concert, or even worshipped at one of several area churches with video screens, you have seen Finch's work. They primarily do large screen video displays, setting up mobile screen for concerts, tours and festivals, and a few video walls for churches. He's also provided video screens for the dedication of the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial in Washington, DC. The constant is that they all thrive on big crowds, a no-no when a contagious virus is running rampant across the globe. The video trucks were only used sporadically, until the COCC hired him to do an event during All-Star weekend.



COVID-19 forced the COCC to pull back its person to person outreach. The All-Star job illustrated how the COCC could safely meet its outreach targets, and from then on, Finch's trucks racked up "many, many miles" and logged "thousands and thousands of

impressions" traveling inner city streets in hard to count communities where there are few billboards.

"We were in the neighborhoods: any time there was an event, they hired us as a backdrop. We were all

over the south side, south suburbs, the west side. We took the census message to the people where they were—in their homes, in the parks, at bus stops. We put it right in their face.." They even did a couple of drive-in movie pop-ups and "three or four" drive-in worship services.

"I'm very thankful that the Census hired us," Finch said. Normally, they work mostly high traffic areas, so the neighborhood census work was a creative pivot for the business. "We usually travel around the country," Finch said. "We went from having nothing (no business), then having something come out of this was a blessing."

What we accomplished over the last year shows that when we come together, we see the power of what's possible. We responded to the pandemic. Rallied in the face of injustice. Gathered from one side of the city to the other to see that our people were counted.

It was a job well done.

Not many people equate the Census with racial equity. But Census data is used to allocate resources for education, childcare, workforce training and health care. If we are undercounted, we lose resources that are rightfully ours. Hundreds of millions of dollars were at stake. Census data also draws political boundaries, which matters a lot to our representation in the halls of government.

Most of all, the census is our history. It is the record of who lived here, at this time and this place. It is the record of how diverse a nation we are. I am honored that we came together to be a part of this coalition to see that our communities are counted.

There are not many things we can do that take only ten minutes but will last for centuries. But that's what the census is; a small amount of effort to be counted in a ledger that is kept for all time.

Everyone was needed.

In the face of this trauma and threat, lurked opportunities to come together. And it took everyone.

It required politicians at all levels to forgo gamesmanship and recognize the essential role that government must play. Further, any policy promulgated must be effectuated at the community level so the benefits actually gets to the intended recipients.

It required the news and media industry to focus more on the real world, everyday impacts this crisis is having on the most vulnerable population rather than the horse race of political jockeying.

It required large corporations, who have longed supported community-based human service providers, to step in and increase their support.

It required those of us in the human service provider community to redouble our efforts to rebuild society's social fabric and continue serving as a valuable economic engine.

It required those with financial security to help the less fortunate with contributions, volunteerism and advocating to our representatives that a safety net is important to as well.

Our children and grandchildren will look back on this moment and take stock of how we did as a society. Did we stand up for vulnerable?

We certainly did.

Thank you for your tireless effort.



Thank you to our HSI Family

COCC COUNTED ON YOU



Census statistics are used to determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives and to inform how billions of dollars in federal funds will be allocated by state, local and federal lawmakers. Illinois loses \$35 million for every 1% of residents not counted in the U.S. Census. These funds help support hospitals, schools, libraries, roads, public housing and transportation.

The various human services organizations that comprise the Counting On Chicago Coalition (COCC) provide needed services that benefit directly from Census-determined funding. They joined forces to leverage their deep channels and connections to hard-to-reach populations to make sure they were counted in the 2020 Census. Working under a grant awarded by the State of Illinois' 2020 Census Grant program, the coalition's purpose is to make sure that traditionally under-represented and undercounted populations in Chicago are represented appropriately in the 2020 federal census. The grant represented the largest effort in the history of the U.S. Census to reach the traditionally hard-to-count populations in Chicago.



Habilitative Systems, Inc. (HIS)
www.habilitative.org (lead agency)



People's Community Development Association of Chicago
www.pcdac.com



Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center
www.anb.today



Phalanx Family Services
www.phalanxgrpservices.org



Austin Childcare Provider's Network
www.austinchildcareprovidersnet.org



PLCCA - Proviso-Leyden Council for Community Action
www.plcca.org



Austin Peoples Action Center
www.AustinPeoplesActionCenter.org



Project Exploration
www.projectexploration.org



BLI & CWB NAACP
www.illinoisnaacp.org/chicagowestside



Sankofa Safe Child Initiative
www.sankofasafechildinitiative.org



Bobby E. Wright Behavioral Health Services
www.bewcbhc.org



Sinai Community Institute
www.sinai.org



Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind
www.chicagolighthouse.org



Teamwork Englewood
www.teamworkenglewood.org



Communities United
www.communitiesunited.org



The Answer, Inc.
www.theanswerinc.org



Family Guidance Centers
www.fgcinc.org



Catholic Bishop of Chicago - St. Agatha Church
www.st-agatha-chicago.org



Fathers Who Care
www.fatherswhocare.org



The Loretto Hospital
www.lorettohospital.org



Garfield Park Community Council
www.gpccommunitycouncil.org



UIC- Institute on Disability and Human Development
www.uic.edu/disability-human-development



Introspect Youth Services
www.introspectyouth.org



WACA -Chicago Family Partnership
www.wacanetwork.org



Laura B. Collins Community Development /Leaders Network
www.leadersnetworkchicago.org



Westside Health Authority
www.healthauthority.org