

## The Campaign for Decent Housing: Black and Latino Coalition Building in Durham, North Carolina

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### Introduction

“We are not outnumbered, we are out-organized”- Malcolm X (1968)<sup>1</sup>

On a bright and sunny Saturday morning on September 26th, 1998, over four-hundred Black and Latino Durham, North Carolina residents marched through the streets of downtown Durham to protest for decent housing.<sup>2</sup> Black and Latino children led the rally and spoke into megaphones. They called landlords “slumlords” and demanded that they fix the holes in their apartment roofs, pave their roads to school, and that the city government address the sewage stench on the streets where they played.<sup>3</sup> This was the second annual rally and march of the Campaign for Decent Housing.<sup>4</sup> This was a community coalition made up of Black and Latino residents of the Northeast Central Durham

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm X. “Speech.” Speech, February 17, 1968, LFTKS, <http://www.lfks.net/en/content/h-rap-brown-free-huey-rally-1968-feb-17>.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Reale, “Rally urges safe neighborhoods.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*. A Note of Language: In this paper, I use the term “Black” to describe people of African-descent, including African-Americans, Black Americans, and immigrants of African descent. My primary sources that include newspapers, interviews, and documentaries used “Black” and “African-American” interchangeably in the 1990s and early 2000s. The majority of my historical subjects identified as Black. I do not use the term “Hispanic” and use the term “Latino” instead to move away from a government-created identity and towards an identity created by people of Latin-American descent. In local newspapers, Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably but most of my historical subjects self-identified as Latino/Latina.

<sup>3</sup> Miriam Stawowy. “Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>4</sup> Miriam Stawowy. “Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

neighborhood and led by various Black and Latino activist in the community.<sup>5</sup> East Durham was (and continues to be) a neighborhood developed by the city government in the 1950s that was intentionally under-resourced and cut-off Black residents from the rest of the city.<sup>6</sup>

The Campaign for Decent Housing organized protests and other initiatives against housing violations and Durham's long history of White supremacist urban housing policies.<sup>7</sup> Started in 1997, this coalition pressured officials to visit apartments to ensure that compliance was met.<sup>8</sup> After pressure from the Campaign, the Department of Housing finally checked the apartments where they found hundreds of violations in only three hours.<sup>9</sup> It had been decades since they had inspected the apartments. They charged the landlords with the violations they found that day and promised the residents that they would return to inspect more homes.<sup>10</sup>

The Campaign for Decent Housing united Black and Latino residents in their common fight to protest years of dilapidated housing, the city's neglect of East Durham, the poor infrastructure, the lack of government services like regular garbage cleanup, sewage, police, and funding for community resources.<sup>11</sup> Latino residents found themselves particularly affected as newcomers to the city. Landlords frequently took advantage of the fact that many Latino residents were undocumented, many did not speak English, and many did not know about their rights as tenants.<sup>12</sup> They threatened Latino residents with eviction or charged them

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<sup>5</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>6</sup> Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan and Carli Brosseau. "Gentrification in Durham: The 'it' city's downtown rise hasn't led to a black-owned boom." *The News and Observer*, October 30, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Bridges. "Officials view housing problem Durham mayor says bus tour 'opened my eyes'." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), October 27, 2002: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>8</sup> Robin L. Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 27, 1998: B1. NewsBank. Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>10</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanic residents land city housing-rights help." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 13, 1997: A15. NewsBank.

<sup>12</sup> Robin L. Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 27, 1998: B1. NewsBank.

\$30 if they complained about their housing conditions to city officials.<sup>13</sup> Many Latino adults stayed at home because they were afraid that landlords would retaliate if they participated in the rally.<sup>14</sup> The campaign highlighted this injustice and alleged that some landlords in East Durham were also city council members.<sup>15</sup> As a cross-racial and ethnic coalition, the Campaign for Decent Housing is one of many examples of how Black and Latinos joined to fight institutional White supremacy in Durham.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1990s, construction and development companies recruited undocumented Latino workers to Durham to exploit their labor. When undocumented Latinos arrived in Durham, they were directly and indirectly affected by Durham's history of White supremacy and the historical underdevelopment of the Black community. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Black Durham residents created a tradition of grassroots organizing to fight the manifestations of White supremacist policy, so Latino workers, with the support of their Black neighbors, were able to build on this legacy. As a way to counter this history and its legacy, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Black and Latino residents in Durham intentionally came together and created cross-racial coalitions in the form of grassroots organizations, civic campaigns and protests, credit unions, community centers, and schools. These coalitions were made to improve their community's standard of living and to fight White supremacy in the form of decades of housing negligence, over-policing, poor schools, increased criminalization, and the overall neglect of Black and Latino Durham neighborhoods. Durham is an example of how Black and Latino people can

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<sup>13</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>14</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanic residents land city housing-rights help." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 13, 1997: A15. NewsBank.

<sup>15</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>16</sup> Borrowing from N.D.B. Connolly's *A World More Concrete* (2014), I define White Supremacy as "as a *system*—or a set of historical relationships—white supremacy was and is far more than the overtly and occasionally racist act. It includes laws and the setting of commercial and institutional priorities. White supremacy also includes the everyday deals that political operators and common people strike in observance of white privilege or, more accurately, white power. And in its overt and more infrastructural forms, white supremacy realized and maintained its power over several decades through its ability to preserve order and to narrow the range of acceptable political expression." N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 4.

overcome their own prejudices, strategize together, and dis-empower White Supremacy in the Deep South and in other regions of the United States.

The creation of the Research Triangle Park (RTP) in the 1990s resulted in a mass influx of Latino immigrants to Durham. The Research Triangle Park was a collaborative project between the city governments of Durham, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh, the state capital.<sup>17</sup> In the face of globalization and the migration of industry to the Global South, the city governments wanted to incentivize companies from a diverse range of industries, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, telecommunications, information technology, and computer networking to establish headquarters in RTP and attract high-skilled workers to live in any of the three areas.<sup>18</sup>

Durham city council members knew that they would need low-skilled laborers to construct RTP and maintain it.<sup>19</sup> At first, Black residents filled positions in construction, maintenance, child care, and domestic work but by the late 1980s, RTP was growing too quickly for the local population to meet the demand for cheap labor.<sup>20</sup> The number of employees at RTP was heading toward 50,000.<sup>21</sup> It would continue to grow until its completion in 2005.<sup>22</sup> In the 1990s, the city and construction firms resorted to recruiting undocumented Latino labor through informal networks.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the creation of RTP resulted in a mass influx of Latino immigrants to Durham in the 1990s.

Many factors pushed and pulled undocumented Latinos to Durham in the 1990s. Construction and development companies in Durham wanted cheap labor to continue to build RTP and preferred employing undocumented immigrants to

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<sup>17</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>18</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>19</sup> "Letters to the editor." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 16, 2005: A8. *NewsBank*.

<sup>20</sup> Jim Wise. "Durham neighborhood group gets to know Hispanic neighbors better," *The News and Observer*, May 8, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Bloom. "30-year, 12-mile project completed." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 26, 1998: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>23</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen and Emilio A. Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations: A Case Study of Durham, NC," *City & Community* 11, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x>.

citizens.<sup>24</sup> Employers could exploit undocumented workers' lack of legal status and English-speaking skills by paying them below the legal minimum wage, working them for longer hours, and denying them worker's rights like worker's compensation or breaks. They went to agricultural worksites near Durham and promoted their companies or they hired immigrants to go around the state and paid them per individual they recruited.<sup>25</sup> Construction and development companies further incentivized immigrants by offering to pay for their bus tickets from towns in Mexico and cities in the Southwest to Durham.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, political and economic instability in Latin America as a result of the Cold War, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Operation Gatekeeper, among other events, pushed many immigrants to escape violence and find work in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Many immigrants who worked in the Southwest eventually migrated East to Durham to escape the rise in xenophobia and the increasing cost of living in Southwestern states.<sup>28</sup> In California, the state with the largest number of undocumented Latino immigrants, xenophobia became manifested in the passing of Proposition 187. Proposition 187 was a state law that restricted "illegal aliens" from accessing public benefits.<sup>29</sup> Similar laws were passed throughout the U.S. Southwest, and this demonstrates widespread xenophobia against undocumented immigrants.<sup>30</sup> Laws like Proposition 187 were not implemented in North Carolina because the state had a very small number of undocumented immigrants in comparison to the Southwest.

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<sup>24</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen, "Laboring Underground: The Employment Patterns of Hispanic Immigrant Men in Durham, NC." *Social problems* vol. 59,1 (2012): 21-42. doi:10.1525/sp.2012.59.1.21

<sup>25</sup>Chenoa A, Flippen and Emilio A Parrado. "Forging Hispanic communities in new destinations: A case study of Durham, NC." *City & Community* vol. 11,1 (2012): 1-30. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, Charles. *The Guestworker*. DVD. Directed by Cynthia Hill. Durham: DocSouth, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 253.

<sup>28</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>29</sup> This law was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger but was challenged in court and a federal court prohibited it, preventing the law from coming into effect. Martin, Philip. "Proposition 187 in California." *The International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (1995): 255-63. doi:10.2307/2547004. Williams, Christopher Newell. "Caught in the Web of Scapegoating: National Coverage of California's Proposition 187." Order No. 3319946, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008, 98.

<http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/193657873?accountid=12861>.

<sup>30</sup> "U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population by State, 2016 | Pew Research Center," accessed May 22, 2019, <https://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/>.

In rural North Carolina, companies welcomed immigrants because they filled low-paying, labor-intensive agricultural and poultry jobs.<sup>31</sup> In urban areas, like Durham, companies also welcomed immigrants because they filled the need for cheap labor in construction and domestic work. Only after Durham's construction boom ended in the mid-2000s, did the city implement anti-immigrant policies like Proposition 187 as a way to dispose of the large population of undocumented Latinos in the city.<sup>32</sup>

At the turn of the twenty-first century, North Carolina experienced the fastest growth in Latino populations in the country. Durham was the city with the twenty-fifth fastest growing Latino population in the country.<sup>33</sup> In 1983, there were about 1,000 Latino residents in Durham, 2,000 by 1990, 17,000 by 2000, and 36,000 by 2010.<sup>34</sup> These statistics are not even entirely accurate. Demographers predict that the statistics are much higher because they note that 90% of Durham's Latino population was undocumented and many people avoided enumeration for fear of deportation.<sup>35</sup> The immigrants' lack of legal U.S. documentation affected where they were able to live when they arrived in Durham in the 1990s. Housing is the point where undocumented Latino migration met the history of housing and White supremacy in Durham.

### **Black and Latino Durham in the 1990s**

When Latinos arrived in Durham, they faced the legacies of White supremacy in Durham when they were barred from moving into White neighborhoods. Even though housing segregation was illegal in 1990, White neighborhoods legally barred undocumented Latinos by requesting social security numbers for credit checks, asking for two months of pay stubs, and providing

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson, Charles. *The Guestworker*. DVD. Directed by Cynthia Hill. Durham: DocSouth, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Nguyen, Mai Thi, and Hannah Gill. "The 287(g) Program-The Costs and Consequences of Local Immigration Enforcement in North Carolina Communities." *The Latino Migration Project The Institute for the Study of the Americas & The Center for Global Initiatives*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> "Hispanic Immigrants Durham's job magnet." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, November 13, 1998: A14. *NewsBank*. "Latino Immigrants Come to the U.S. with Negative Stereotypes of Black Americans, New Study Shows," *Duke Today*, accessed May 20, 2019, <https://today.duke.edu/2006/07/racialpolitics.html>.

<sup>34</sup> "Durham Neighborhood Group Gets to Know Hispanic Neighbors Better," *News and Observer*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Greg Johnson. "Hispanic

applications only in English.<sup>36</sup> Latinos did not have social security numbers, were often paid in cash with no pay stub records, and most did not speak or read English.<sup>37</sup> Latinos turned to East Durham where they were received and welcomed by many members of the Black community, including landlords.<sup>38</sup>

East Durham was a magnet for Black migrants in Durham and had a history of housing migrants with low-incomes.<sup>39</sup> Most landlords rented apartments in East Durham without asking for social security numbers nor requiring proof of income nor implementing housing applications.<sup>40</sup> They offered low rental costs, were tolerant of overcrowding, but the caveat was that these apartments were in deteriorated conditions.<sup>41</sup> When landlords realized that most of their Latino tenants were undocumented, they threatened to evict them or notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the governmental entity that deported undocumented people.<sup>42</sup> Landlords relegated undocumented families to these inhumane conditions, but did not threaten Black tenants in the same manner understanding that Black residents were better aware of their rights as tenants, could argue with landlords in English, and regularly petitioned housing violations to the city government, even though they went unaddressed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen and Emilio A. Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations: A Case Study of Durham, NC," *City & Community* 11, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x>.

<sup>37</sup> Armando Mendez, Interview by Colin Austin. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>38</sup> Wade Bowick, Interview by Angela Hornsby. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>39</sup> Flippen and Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations"; Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*; Davidson, *The Best of Enemies*. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>40</sup> Armando Mendez, Interview by Colin Austin. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>41</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>42</sup> Robin L. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>43</sup> Robin L. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

Since Latino residents arrived to Durham in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Black residents incorporated Latinos into their long tradition of community organizing to improve living conditions in East Durham. Black, White, and Latino residents through the local White congregation of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and the Black congregation at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church came together with recent Latino migrants to establish El Centro Hispano.<sup>44</sup> El Centro increased access to translated resources and acted as a starting point to housing, schooling, and employment information and assistance. Latino volunteers worked at the center until full-time staff was hired.

These religious congregations found and rented office space for El Centro Hispano, and the North Carolina Minority Support Center (NCMSC) paid for the rent and utilities in the first couple of years.<sup>45</sup> The NCMSC was a coalition of Black credit unions that was founded in the twentieth century during Jim Crow segregation when Black residents were barred from White banks.<sup>46</sup> They issues loans and business support to Black residents who wanted to start their own businesses in Durham. The NCMSC was largely supported by the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the first Black-owned bank in Durham created during segregation, a couple of years after Black residents first moved to the Hayti neighborhood of

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<sup>44</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, the mission of local churches in Durham focused on “help[ing] assist community organizing for social transformation.” As part of their obedience to the mission of God, the church “would become involved in concrete situations of human suffering and side with the poor and marginalized as they become subjects of their own history.” Within the Catholic Church, this focus toward social justice took a sharper turn after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Women of Color: Organizing for Transformation A Project of the Urban Rural Mission of the World Council of Churches November, 1994, in the Leah Wise Papers #5645, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “History | El Centro Hispano,” *El Centro Hispano History*, January 1, 2015. <https://www.elcentronc.org/content/history>.

<sup>45</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Katushka Olave, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Esperanza Hernandez, Interview by Elizabeth Barahona, December 23, 2018. “From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina.” *NBC News*, September 26, 2014. “History | El Centro Hispano,” *El Centro Hispano History*, January 1, 2015. <https://www.elcentronc.org/content/history>. Katushka Olave, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>46</sup> “Our Story,” *Self-Help Credit Union*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. “History, The Journey of Carolina Small Business Development Fund.” *Carolina Small Business Development Fund*, Raleigh, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. Saundra Scales, Interview by Daphne Fruchtman. *Long Civil Rights Movement: African American Credit Unions*. Southern Oral History Program.

Durham in 1907.<sup>47</sup> An important aspect of the bank’s charter is to “enhance the wealth and well being of the communities that we serve by providing competitive and holistic financial solutions, with particular emphasis on the financial needs of underserved populations and geographies.”<sup>48</sup> The Mechanics and Farmers Bank was the first bank to support Latino businesses in Durham.<sup>49</sup> Not only did Black-owned banks support Latino community centers like El Centro Hispano, but when Latinos arrived in Durham, they directly worked with migrants to establish Latino businesses.

In October of 1997, a series of home invasions aimed at Latino residents, resulted in sensationalized news reports that aimed to pit Latino residents and Black residents against each other. The Herald Sun and the Raleigh WRAL news network published articles that said the “relationship between Black and Latino residents was strained” and in order to end the crime spree, more officers needed to patrol East Durham.<sup>50</sup> In response to these events, Black and Latino residents came together to address the structural issues that caused these crimes. Many Latino residents were undocumented laborers did not have social security numbers to open a bank account at a corporate bank, were paid in cash, and stored their money in their homes.<sup>51</sup> Residents saw a need for a Latino credit union that offered services unique to the Latino community like services in Spanish, membership for the majority undocumented Latino community, and classes about financial literacy. Latino residents and Black credit unions came together like they had in 1992 with El Centro Hispano and helped create the Latino Credit Union

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<sup>47</sup> “Our History,” *Mechanics and Farmers Bank*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. “History, The Journey of Carolina Small Business Development Fund.” *Carolina Small Business Development Fund*, Raleigh, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. “Mechanics and Farmers Bank: North Carolina’s Best Kept Secret.” *The Winston-Salem Chronicle*, August 1, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> “Our Mission – M&F Bank,” accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.mfbonline.com/our-mission-2/>.

<sup>49</sup> “From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina.” NBC News, September 26, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> “Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham,” WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997. Miriam Stawowy. “Hispanics call together forum to focus on solutions to crime.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 1, 1997: C1. *NewsBank*. Robin Reale. “Black, Hispanic women work to build trust.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1997: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>51</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Miriam Stawowy. “Hispanics call together forum to focus on solutions to crime.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 1, 1997: C1. *NewsBank*.

(LCCU) that opened in 2000.<sup>52</sup> The LCCU grew to become the largest credit union in the state and its members included Black and White residents.<sup>53</sup>

The sensationalized reports from the 1997 events overlooked the past seven years of cross-racial organizing that had bonded the two groups. The reports though, heavily influenced the police and city government to take a different approach to prevent crime.<sup>54</sup> The police department applied to the state's crime commission grant in 1997 and was awarded \$57,000 to begin the Hispanic Outreach Intervention and Strategy Team (HOIST). The Durham police created this initiative to better protect and police Latino residents.<sup>55</sup> The program consisted of hiring two bilingual police officers who patrolled East Durham without weapons.<sup>56</sup> The officers would serve as translators for the Latino community and instead of calling 911, residents would call the officers.

The goal of the program was to "reduce fear of police" among the Latino community.<sup>57</sup> The program continued to apply for more federal grants and increased to four officers. The program was eventually fully funded by the Durham police department's budget.<sup>58</sup> For over nine years, the Durham police trained themselves alongside the Latino community to better police them and even established an office for themselves in El Centro Hispano. This community policing later became detrimental to the Latino community in 2008 when the Durham police united with Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agents (ICE) to deport Latino families.

The coalition between Black and Latino residents continued despite the obstacles news media and policing authorities presented for the group. Important

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<sup>52</sup> "From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina." *NBC News*, September 26, 2014. "Our History." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019

<sup>53</sup> "Our History." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019 "Mission." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019

<sup>54</sup> Robin Reale. "Black, Hispanic women work to build trust." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1997: A1. NewsBank. Miriam Stawowy. "Interpreters bridge gap between police, Hispanics." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), July 20, 1997: B1. NewsBank.

<sup>55</sup> Linda Miller and Kären Hess, *Community Policing: Partnerships for Problem Solving* (Cengage Learning, 2007), 195.

<sup>56</sup> Kammie Michael. "Bilingual liaisons essential for police Translators provide vital link between Hispanics, officers." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), November 2, 1998: B1. NewsBank.

<sup>57</sup> Theodore, Nik. *Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement*. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, 2013. Accessed May 1, 2019.

[https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE\\_COMMUNITIES\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.PDF](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE_COMMUNITIES_REPORT_FINAL.PDF).

<sup>58</sup> Miller and Hess, 196.

to this struggle is that they understood that poor housing and infrastructure in East Durham contributed to the crimes. As a response to poor housing and White supremacy, they created the Campaign for Decent Housing and brought over 400 people together and twenty-five Durham organizations to address the dilapidated housing, the threats landlords made to Latino residents, and the vacant city-owned houses.<sup>59</sup> In the first year of the campaign, Black residents supported a petition made by Latino residents that documented the cases of substandard housing.<sup>60</sup> In the second year of the campaign, they successfully pressured Durham officials to inspect apartments where Latinos lived for housing violations. Within three hours, officials found over 600 code violations and had to return for subsequent visits to address health code violations.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from housing coalition, Black and Latino residents understood that reports about the home invasions instilled fear among newly arrived Latino residents. In 1997, Black and Latino residents created two programs that helped build personal relationships between the residents. The Crossing Community Borders Forum was organized at the Hayti Heritage Center and the Black and Hispanics Are Alike (BAHA) coalition was started at the Eastway Elementary School for parents and both continued for three years.<sup>62</sup> The Crossing Community Borders Forum organized regular sessions where Black and Latino residents of East Durham shared a community potluck, brought mariachi groups and rhythm-and-blues singers to perform, and organized youth activities for children like bilingual scavenger hunts and story hours.<sup>63</sup>

The BAHA coalition was organized by Latina and Black activists, Rossana Perez and Jackie Wagstaff. The organizers understood that Latino parents and children had been impacted by the events and wanted to work to

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<sup>59</sup> Robin Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>60</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>61</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>62</sup> Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 23, 1999: B1. *NewsBank*. "Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham," WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 23, 1999: B1. *NewsBank*.

reduce the anxieties and fears among the community members. Its goal was to create personal relationships between Black and Latino parents of Eastway students and teach each other to speak in their native languages.<sup>64</sup> About twenty BAHA families met weekly during weekday mornings and the group quickly evolved into a space where members could advocate for better housing and share their personal issues. One week the group invited landlords to talk peacefully about the community's issues with housing, and in another week a mother opened up about the death of her baby.<sup>65</sup> Coalitions like Crossing Community Borders and Blacks and Hispanics Are Alike provided a space for community healing between neighbors and empowered residents to advocate for themselves about housing, education, and personal issues.

Black and Latino residents pushed back against every oppressive municipal policy and program that harmed them, they advocated for one another in housing and education, and they continue to do so today. Durham is an example of how Black and Latino coalition building can combat the legacy of White supremacy in local communities. Black and Latino community members responded to systemic injustices with grassroots organizing. The history and legacy of Black communities like the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the Hayti Community Center, Black religious congregations, and Black activists, used their power and resources to aid incoming Latino community. Together they created organizations like El Centro Hispano, the Latino Community Credit Union. Through joint advocacy project like Black and Hispanics are Alike and the Campaign for Decent Housing, Black and Latino coalitions succeeded in improving conditions and providing resources for working-class communities in all sorts of communities outside of big cities.

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<sup>64</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 23, 1999: B1. NewsBank. "Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham," WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997.

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