

LATINOS UP FOR THE COUNT

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Body

Still angry over the Census Bureau's admitted undercount of minorities in 1990, some of the city's Hispanic leaders met yesterday with the bureau's director to make sure there won't be a repeat in the next census.

"This agency needs to establish trust within the Latino community, and some of that is going to depend on what other agencies of this government do between now and 2000," said Angelo Falcon, director of the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy.

Clinton administration officials have acknowledged that the 1990 count missed about 5.2% of the nation's Hispanics and 4.8% of blacks, compared with 1.6% of the total population.

"We cannot do it alone," said Census Bureau Director Martha Farnsworth Riche. "We have 12 regional offices, but we don't know all the communities, all the organizations and all the businesses we should know to do this better."

Latino leaders have speculated that many of the uncouned in the 1990 census were undocumented immigrants afraid to have contact with any government agency.

"In light of the immigrant-bashing and fear within the Latino community, we need to assure people that the Census Bureau is not working for the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]," said Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-Brooklyn).

"There are people out there who don't want us to count undocumented immigrants, but our constitutional job is to count everyone who's out there on census day," said Emma Moreno of the Census Bureau.

The bureau's effort for the 2000 census will include targeting areas that were found to be undercounted, using community organizations to disseminate information on the census and producing community-specific TV, radio and print ad campaigns.

Angelo Falcon, director of the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, seemed hopeful but wary of the bureau's show of good faith. "This agency needs to establish trust within the Latino community, and some of that is going to depend on what other agencies of this government do between now and 2000," he said.

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