



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Call: New Report Reveals Inconsistent Racial/Ethnic Data Categories at State-Level Youth Justice Agencies, Minimizing Latinx Youth Within the Justice System

Los Angeles, CA — August 24, 2020 — On Tuesday, August 25, [Alianza for Youth Justice](#) and the [UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative](#) are releasing a new “Call to Action” report detailing [The Latinx Data Gap in the Youth Justice System](#). The report shows that inconsistent data collection methods complicate race and ethnicity tracking across different stages in the youth justice system. **A press call to discuss the report will be held at 10am PST / 1pm EST** and will feature Congressman Tony Cárdenas, in addition to the report’s researchers. To obtain the embargoed report, please register [here](#).

“This long overdue report provides a human face to the compelling research findings of the discrepancies on how the fifty states and district of Columbia do and do not count our diverse population,” said **Marcia Rincon-Gallardo, co-founder and Director of Alianza for Youth Justice** and one of the report’s contributors. “Indigenous, Afro-Latino, Brown Girls, Boys and gender expansive youth face racial and ethnic inequities, and their invisibility impacts their exit from these unjust systems. As we manifest a society without youth in cages, my hope is that we can renew our focus on investing in young people, their families and community with healing and culturally centered approaches, rather than funding structurally racist, broken and ineffective systems.”

“As our country undertakes a long overdue reckoning on race and justice, it is critical that Latinos be included in the conversation,” said **Sonja Diaz, Founding Director of the UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative**. “Far too often we are overlooked, but to effectively address inequities in the justice system, especially the egregious disparities facing Black Americans, policymakers and advocates need accurate data on Latinx youth. This new report details the challenges of collecting data on system-impacted youth and offers a way forward so that leaders can craft viable solutions based on facts as we reopen our economy and transform failed systems.”

Federal law mandates uniform data collection methods for racial and ethnic data, yet many state-level youth justice agencies fail to collect ethnic information. Because Latinxs are categorized as an ethnicity, the lack of ethnic data collection compromises the accuracy of population-level data with respect to youth justice.

“When criminal justice agencies in the states do not accurately count and track Latinx youth, including LGBTQ youth, and other youth of color, policymakers are unable to effectively advocate for reform,” said **Francisco Villarruel, Ph.D., Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University’s Julian Samora Institute** and one of the

report's contributors. "We need consistent and accurate data about Latinx youth in the justice systems across the country."

When states exclusively collect racial data, rather than both racial and ethnic data, they inadvertently neglect the Latinx population, since those individuals will likely be categorized as either white or Black. Many Latinxs identify as mixed race, Afro-Latinos, or Indigenous.

The Latinx Data Gap in the Youth Justice System report builds on [earlier work from 2003](#), where researchers illustrated the experiences of Latinx youth in youth justice systems within the 11 most populated Latino states.

"The lack of comprehensive Latinx ethnic data jeopardizes the ability to build a responsive youth justice system that meets the needs of thousands of Latinos and Black youth who are incarcerated and under supervision," said **Adriana Bernal, UCLA Research and Policy Fellow** and author on the report. "Legislators and advocates cannot address racial and ethnic disparities, institute culturally appropriate care, including an effective COVID-19 response, without accurate data. Given the increasing numbers of Latinos in the youth justice system, we need accurate ethnic data reporting."

"It is crucial and necessary for policymakers and the broader public to understand that our Latinx youth are trapped in a web of exploitation in the Juvenile Injustice System. While we make up a high percentage of the incarcerated population, we are displaced in a cataloging system where we are made invisible. We need more consistent data collection which will help our advocates fight for relevant resources that will help us break the chains of incarceration by uplifting our health and well-being," said **Bernie Gomez, system-impacted youth advocate at Alianza for Youth Justice**.

WHAT: Press Call: Release of new report, The Latinx Data Gap in the Youth Justice System

WHO:

- U.S. Congressman Tony Cárdenas (CA-29)
- Dr. Francisco Villarruel, Alianza for Youth Justice
- Sonja Diaz, UCLA Latino Politics and Policy Initiative
- Joanna Molina Youth representative directly impacted
- Bernie Gomez Youth representative directly impacted
- Moderator: Marcia Rincon-Gallardo, Alianza for Youth Justice

WHEN: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 at 10am PST / 1pm EST.

CLICK [HERE](#) to register.

About Alianza, please visit: <https://www.alianzayouth.org/#Mission-and-Vision>

About UCLA LPPI, please visit: <https://latino.ucla.edu/>

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Media Contacts

De Alba Communications (For Alianza for Youth Justice)

Victoria Sanchez De Alba, victoria@dealba.net / 650-270-7810

Adriana Maestas, adrianam@gmail.com / 949-466-3968

Eliza Moreno (For UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative)
lppipress@luskin.ucla.edu / 310-487-9815