



LATINO COMMUNITY CRUCIAL TO PROSPERITY AND GROWTH OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION

THE "LATINO EXPLOSION" IS A MISNOMER. WE ARE ALREADY HERE

We own neighborhood shops and grocery stores. We are service providers. We are in boardrooms, newsrooms and corporations. We are CEOs, philanthropists, Supreme Court justices and presidential candidates.

But many of us know that the Latino community's emergence into the national consciousness is a long time coming.

WE ARE A PART OF ST. LOUIS NOW AND WE ARE ST. LOUIS' FUTURE

I'm working on a six-month consulting assignment for the Mosaic Project to connect with organizations across all sectors to find out what the people in our community need to live, work and play in this region. At the project's end, I will deliver a set of recommendations on how our region can be bolder in welcoming Latinos in 2017.

Here's some data to consider: since 1980, the Latino population in the St. Louis area has increased 233 percent. According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census, there are more than 72,000 Latinos living in the St. Louis region.

While our numbers in the region have increased, the region's population has been in steady decline. In 1980, St. Louis was the 10th-largest metropolitan area in the U.S.

IN 2012, WE RANKED 19TH

St. Louis has the lowest immigration share of a top 20 city and second slowest population growth. Other metros in the top 20 averaged 40 percent faster economic growth over the past decade than St. Louis.

Our region's economic growth and prosperity depends on our ability

to attract and retain Latinos and other foreign-born people who are willing to make the St. Louis region their home. Compared to native-born U.S. citizens, immigrants are 60 percent more likely to start a business and they are three times more likely to be highly skilled.

That's why the St. Louis Mosaic Project, a non-profit organization that is part of the World Trade Center-St. Louis and the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, is putting an additional focus on Latinos this year.

The Mosaic Project wants to make the St. Louis region the fastest-growing, major metropolitan area for foreign-born people in the U.S. by 2020. We want these bright, creative and industrious individuals here.

THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR HELP

Thirty-one percent of Latinos in our area are younger than 15 years old. It is more important than ever before to find ways to symbiotically share our *cultura* with St. Louis and make our region feel like home for those Latinos who grew up here, to those who came from Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and all across the Spanish-speaking world.

I want to connect with you. Please let me know of initiatives, projects or ideas you may have on how we can make our region better for our community and make the future brighter for us all.

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