

# **Mobilizing Latino Communities to Safeguard Reproductive Health and Rights: From the Community to Latino Leaders and Elected Officials**

National Institute for Reproductive Health and  
The Hispanic Federation  
APHA 2007  
Funded by the Ford Foundation

# Latino Reproductive Rights Project

- National Institute for Reproductive Health education/training arm of NARAL NY
- Hispanic Federation membership organization of over 90 Latino health and human service agencies

- *The Latino Reproductive Rights Project (LRRP) seeks to understand, communicate with, educate and mobilize Latinos to access comprehensive reproductive health care and protect a woman's right to choose. The project was developed in response to the growing reproductive health disparities in Latino communities*

# Responding to Latino Reproductive Health Disparities

- Hispanic women residing in the United States have twice the cervical cancer incidence rate of non-Hispanic whites.
- In NYC, more than half of all teen mothers were Latina (52.4%) compared to African-American teens (36.9%) and white teens (7.6%) and Asian teens (2.8%).

# Responding to Latino Reproductive Health Disparities

- Latinas are less likely than African Americans and whites to use a method of contraception at first intercourse.
- *Latino teens report that they do not use condoms consistently or at all 71% of the time. African- Americans and Whites report not using condoms consistently or at all (54% and 52% respectively.)*

# Responding to Latino Reproductive Health Disparities

- Latinos and African Americans make up 81% of the new HIV cases in NYC.
- Latino (61%) and non-Latino whites (62%) are less likely to talk about HIV/AIDS with an adult or family member than are African American students (73%).

# Project Components

- A. Research Latino knowledge and attitudes towards reproductive health care and rights, and develop reproductive health and choice messages for Latino Communities
- B. Train adolescent and adult “*promotores*” - developing voices and disseminating information in Latino communities

## A. Research Latino knowledge and attitudes towards reproductive health care and rights

- Participants were recruited based on their opinions regarding abortion to develop culturally meaningful choice and reproductive health messages.
- Four focus groups conducted among NYC Latinos
  - *Two focus groups were conducted in English, one for males (8) and one for females (10).*
  - Two focus groups were conducted in Spanish, one for males (9) and one for females (9).



# Demographics

## Country of origin

- 17 Dominicans
- 9 Puerto Ricans
- 7 Central and South Americans
- 3 Mexicans

# Demographics

- Marital status split evenly among the English and Spanish speakers.
- Participants with children and with no children was also even.
- The majority of English speakers were registered voters, and the Spanish speakers were a mix of registered (10) and non-registered voters (8).

# Demographics

- The age group distribution was fairly even among Sp and Eng speakers (40-55), (20-29) age group-had 50% more English speakers and (30-39) age group-had 50% more Spanish speakers.
- Most English speakers had lived in the U.S. 20 or more years and most Spanish speakers had been in the USA less than 20 years.
- Educational attainment was similar among the English and Spanish speakers.

# Focus group findings - poster and pamphlet development

Terminology such as “reproductive health,” “family planning,” and “reproductive rights,” are confusing to both English and Spanish groups.

“I don’t like the phrase reproductive health. People might not know what you are talking about.” (Eng, F)

“I think this is really a new term, ‘reproductive health.’ ...they should say, ‘reproductive health is this, this and this.’” (Sp, M)

“Pro-choice” is a vague concept and difficult to translate.

“That does not have a correct connotation. It should be the right to reproduce yourself.”  
(Sp, M)

Believe government plays an important role in funding reproductive health services for low-income women and protecting rights.

“Sometimes it is the government who pays for abortions...it's the tax payers.” (Eng, F)

“ ‘*The government must stay out of the doctor's offices,*’ was not clear to me... The government supports a lot of medical offices and clinics so they have to take part. The government is providing money so they have to know what is happening.”  
(Sp, M)

## Individuals support educational campaigns

- “I listen to radio programs where people have questions for gynecologists... there are health fairs, there are ads for where people can get informed...” (Sp, F)
- “We need more information, so people know what their rights are...people have rights even though they are in this country illegally.” (Sp, F)



## Participants responded most positively to communication materials that reference and feature men's roles in contraceptive and abortion decision-making

“It’s not effective. It says she makes the decision, but she’s alone there...the male is missing there. How’d she get pregnant?” (Sp, M)

“If we say it is by law, then we are contradicting ourselves because we’ve said we decide about our contraceptives and our body. If we decide to take our contraceptives then why are we going to tell him we’re going to have an abortion?” (Sp, F)

## Views on Abortion

“ I don't really know what they have and they don't have but I think it is up to me to decide.” (Eng, F)

“Most of us come from poor countries where most of the population lives in poverty. If...her child... is going to have a hard time, I don't think we men can tell her, ‘No, you have to have it.’ It is her decision. It's her body, and she knows why to make that decision.” (Sp, M)

## Views on Abortion

“ I agree with abortion if my wife’s health is in danger. I agree if my daughter gets raped, but not if it is inconvenient. (Sp,M)

“Parents should be notified if they are minors. There was a case at Columbia Presbyterian where two girls died. It should be controlled just like cigarettes to minors.( Sp, F)



**“I support a woman’s right to make personal decisions.”**

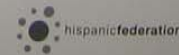
No one should prevent women from having access to contraception, medical care during pregnancy, or a legal and safe option to end a pregnancy if that’s their decision.

Being Pro-Choice means having the freedom to make decisions about your health and the health of your family.

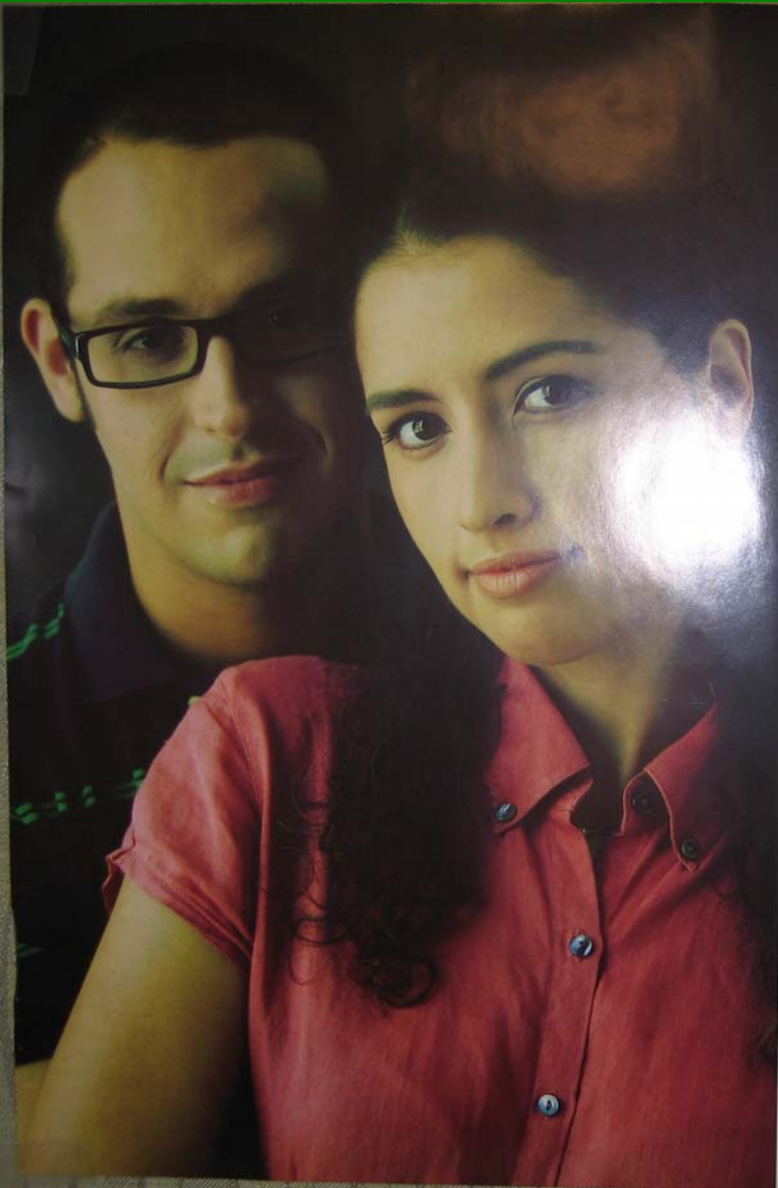
**It’s your decision and your right.**

To learn more visit [www.pro-decision.com](http://www.pro-decision.com)  
or call 1-866-HF-AYUDA (1-866-432-9832)

**LATINO REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS PROJECT**



The *Latino Reproductive Rights Project* works to expand our rights and access to healthcare.  
This project is made possible through the generous support of the Ford Foundation  
and the New York State Office of Children & Family Services.



## “Queremos poder decidir si deseamos tener hijos, y cuándo tenerlos”.

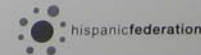
Todos deberíamos tener acceso a métodos anticonceptivos, cuidado médico durante el embarazo, chequeos de cáncer cervical, análisis para detectar enfermedades de transmisión sexual, así como tener información sobre la terminación legal y segura del embarazo.

Ser Pro-Decision significa tener la libertad para tomar decisiones sobre tu salud y la de tu familia.

### Es tu decisión y tu derecho.

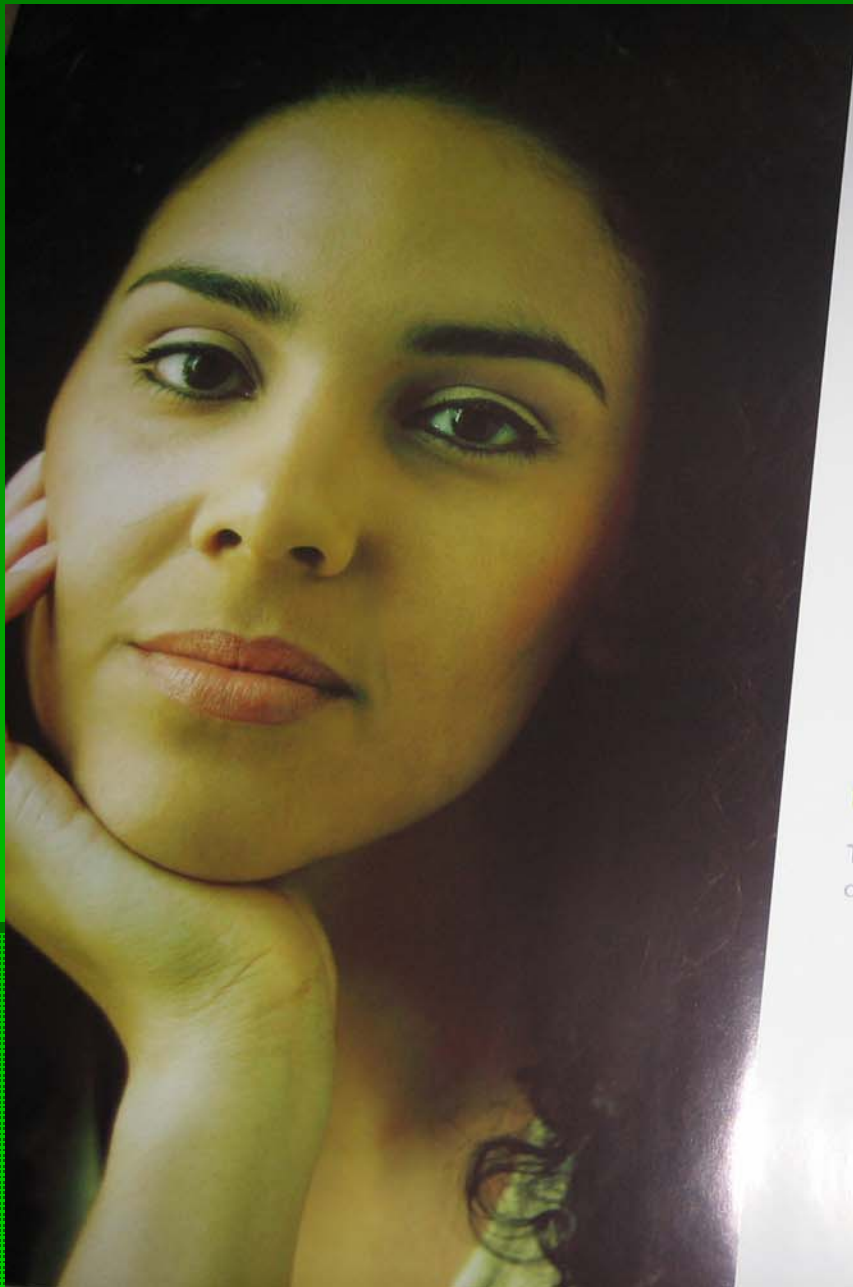
Para más información visita [www.pro-decision.com](http://www.pro-decision.com)  
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**LATINO REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS PROJECT**



*Latino Reproductive Rights Project* trabaja para hacer valer nuestro derecho y acceso a servicios de salud.

Este proyecto es posible gracias al apoyo de *Ford Foundation*  
y el *New York State Office of Children & Family Services*.



# “No one can deny us the right to make decisions about our health.”

It is important that you understand your rights to reproductive health care. You should have the right to access contraception, medical care during pregnancy and the option to end a pregnancy legally and safely.

Being Pro-Choice means having the freedom to make decisions about your health and the health of your family.

**It's your decision and your right.**

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**LATINO REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS PROJ**



# Poster & Pamphlet Distribution

- Posters and pamphlets were distributed to:
  - Over 90 member agencies of the Hispanic Federation
  - New York City Council Members
  - New York State Assembly Members
  - Sister-song Conference 2007
  - Teen PACT More than Just Sex Conference 2007
  - Encuentro Latino sobre VIH/SIDA 2007
  - LRRP Community Forums 2007
  - LRRP Workshops
  - Minority Women's Health Summit- Women of Color: Addressing Disparities. Affirming Resilience, and Developing Strategies for Success 2007

**B. Train adolescent and adult  
*promotores*- Developing voices and  
disseminating information in Latino  
communities**



## *Promotores*



- **LRRP** trains adult and youth *promotores* to increase knowledge of Latino reproductive health disparities. In turn, the *promotores* will disseminate the information by conducting sessions within their agency and/or community. Ongoing technical assistance is provided.
  - *Promotoras* have now reached over 1600 individuals from April through September, 2007.

# Adult and Adolescent "Promotor" Trainings



# Collaborating Agencies

- El Nuevo San Juan Health Center (Urban Health Plan)-Bronx
- Committee for Hispanic Children and Families- Bronx
- William F. Ryan Community Health Center- Chelsea
- Dominican Women's Development Center-Washington Heights
- Circulo de la Hispanidad-Hempstead, LI
- Asociación Comunal de Dominicano Progresistas (ACDP)-Washington Heights
- Dominican Sisters-Bronx
- LRRP Leadership Council

# Training Topics

- Adolescent pregnancy rates, including contraception and abortion
- E.C., emergency contraception
- HIV/AIDS, including condom use
- Cervical cancer and information on the HPV vaccine
- Facilitation and presentation skills

# Training Guide Adapted to Agency

- Street work setting (5-20 min. guide)
- Clinical Setting (5 min- 40 min. guides)
- School based setting/After school programs (30 min classroom guide)

# Media Briefings

**LRRP** coordinates and attends media briefings to raise awareness of Latino reproductive health disparities, the community-based efforts underway and where to access services.

# Media Briefings

- Press briefing on HPV, cervical cancer and vaccine covered by El Diario la Prensa; attended by Council woman Maria del Carmen Arroyo-Bronx.
- Spanish CNN interview on Supreme Court ruling on partial birth abortion ban act.
- Dominican Women's Development Center declaration for legalized abortion in the Dominican Republic.

# Community Forums

**LRRP** organizes community forums at which community members, sexual and reproductive health care providers/ educators, and community and legislative leaders are invited to discuss Latino reproductive health disparities. This gathering will urge community and legislative leaders to safeguard Latino sexual and reproductive health by working to eliminate these disparities.



# Community Forums

- East Harlem Council for Community Improvement Auditorium- NYC, 96 people attended.
  - Council members Melissa Mark Viverito
- Lincoln Medical Center Auditorium-Bronx, 63 people attended
  - Council members Joel Rivera and Maria del Carmen Arroyo and Assembly woman Naomi Rivera

# Community Forums



# Community Forum Input

- Need for parent education-coaching for adults/parents/community
- Solicit more support from the government and the Dept. of Education to have more Sex-Ed in schools
- More effective marketing
- Join pregnancy prevention groups (ie. Myspace.com, learning about scholarship opportunities and events)

# Community Forum Input

- It is important to take culture as a consideration when we approach people
- Encouraging male involvement.
- Staying active helps reduce the risk of teen pregnancy. There should be more facilities, centers and resources for children to access.
- Teens need to have access to immediate attention
- Celebrate women's accomplishments, passions, power, "womanhood". Empower women.

# Project Accomplishments

- Training guides and education tools available
- Bi-lingual web site
- Reproductive health poetry
- Identifying new partners
- Over 1600 people reached by *promotoras* since April 2007
- LRRP messages and training integrated and institutionalized by participating agencies

# Lessons Learned

- Explore particular needs and working environment of each collaborating agency
- Community forums are a great vehicle to identify groups for workshops and materials distribution- can be done early in the intervention to kick-off project
- Important to provide interns and community workers active roles in community outreach activities to increase their vested interest in mission

# Lessons Learned

- Make it easy- adapt training guides and all materials to agency and “promotora” needs. This will facilitate the integration new topics into their existing work load.
- Make time to involve the media, large and small community papers. They need stories.
- Legislative leaders want and need to be involved.
- Help community use their own words to spread the word on reproductive health and rights

# I Don't Want to Be...

by Elizabeth Frontaan

- I don't want to be another statistic  
or another little girl who made a poor decision  
and ended up pregnant  
I don't want to be another young girl  
who didn't use her head  
and is now lying on a bed  
she was just having some fun  
she thought that using a condom was "wack"  
so she decided to have unprotected sex  
now she's crying her heart out  
I don't want to be part of the 10 million ages 15 to 24 that get n infected with HPV

I don't want to be one of the 3 out of 10 teens that had a baby and no high school  
And now can't pursue her dreams  
I am Latina  
I am Dominican  
I am 17 and I'm going to finish my dream,  
You see, I'm going to finish High School soon,  
and I'm going to follow through because my future matters to me  
My mommy counts on me to be something  
I count on myself  
to make changes in the Bronx  
I am not going to be part of the 52.4 % of girls that are now mothers  
and doesn't have a clue  
but I know that I do  
So when tomorrow starts with me  
I'm gunna be somebody!



# Web sites

[www.nirhealth.org](http://www.nirhealth.org)

[www.hispanicfederation.org](http://www.hispanicfederation.org)