The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute

A Brown Paper

Lifting Latinos Up

Lifting Latinos up by their "Rootstraps:" Moving Beyond Trauma Through a Healing-Informed Model to Engage Latino Boys and Men.

What We Know

How We Heal

What We Have

Recommendations for What We Need to Thrive

The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute is a Division of the National Compadres Network, a not-for-profit organization responding to national requests to address the growing needs of the Latino community.

www.nlffi.org
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The National Latino
Fatherhood & Family Institute

The National Compadres Network is a national effort whose focus is the reinforcement of the positive involvement of Chicano, Latino and Native-American males in the lives of their families and community. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the mission of the National Compadres Network (NCN) has been to strengthen, rebalance, and redevelop the traditional *Compadre* extended kinship network by encouraging, supporting and re-rooting the positive involvement of males in their families and community and preventing or reducing the incidence of family and community violence, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and other oppressive behaviors. As a result of the overwhelming need locally and nationally, NCN launched the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI). NLFFI serves as NCN's training, technical assistance, policy, advocacy, research and evaluation arm to assist local and national organizations to develop and implement programs that are culturally competent and draw from the resiliency of Chicano/Latino families and communities. While NLFFI's primary focus is directed to the Chicano/Latino population, the organization has a long history of collaborating with organizations and communities of diverse ethnic backgrounds. It is committed to providing services to all boys and men, families and communities. Additional information about our organization, services and resources can be found on our websites at:

http://www.nationalcompadresnetwork.org
http://www.nlffi.org

Training and Technical Assistance Services
NLFFI brings together culturally competent, nationally recognized leaders in the fields of fatherhood, rites of passage, health, education, family violence, teen-pregnancy prevention, cultural competence, juvenile justice, social services, advocacy, trauma, healing and evidence-based research. NLFFI works in partnership with community leaders and decision makers to create strategic and sustainable systems of change. NLFFI also provides support in the areas of training, technical assistance, collective impact building, research, leadership development, and resource and material development.

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Executive Summary

What We Know. The 16 million Latino children and youth currently in America represent a crucial segment of our country's future workers, taxpayers, parents, citizens, voters, and leaders (National Council of La Raza, 2010). More than one Latino child in three (35%) is poor, compared to one white child in eight, making them less likely to finish high school, more likely to be poor as young adults, and less likely to be working between the ages of 25 and 29. That Latino teens are currently more than twice as likely to drop out of high school (Chapman et al., 2010), coupled with risk resultant from exposure to protracted poverty, limits the life prospects of high school dropouts. In addition, currently Latinos make up the majority population in juvenile detention centers and prisons. Despite these profound health, educational and socio-economic inequities facing Latinos, targeted funding and culturally relevant programming for this significant population is sparse, and is failing to meet its unique needs. Furthermore, any innovation in addressing these disparities requires investments that move beyond merely "trauma-informed care" and generic wraparound service systems. In its place would be a "healing-informed," culturally specific approach for service delivery that is rooted in long-overlooked indigenous principles and practices, as well as funding that focuses specifically on the needs of Latino boys and men.

What We Have. Culturally relevant innovation and capacity currently exist, but require replication in order to fully inform the prevention field of the disparity impacting Latino and Native boys and men. At the programmatic level, *La Cultura Cura*, or Cultural-Based Healing, is a method for healing and healthy development which is inextricably linked to restoring one's true cultural identity as the foundation of well-being for individuals, families, communities and society alike. It employs a multigenerational process of learning and/or remembering one's true and positive cultural values, principles, customs, and traditions. To promulgate *La Cultura Cura* at the systems and institutional levels, the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI), a division of the National Compadres Network, which has been a leader in the field, will expand the group's innovative, healing-informed program, known as *La Cultura Cura Healing Generations*. This effort provides a framework and process to transform the experiences of Latino and Native men and boys, their families and communities beyond the current model of identifying trauma, instead moving toward a prosperous and thriving community. This will be accomplished through:

- Culturally rooted and responsive programming;
- Provider network and capacity-building; and
- Transformation of systems from trauma- to healing-informed efforts

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La Cultura Cura Healing Generations is a self-sustaining framework that taps into a resource-rich cadre of experts and elders who can transform the national dialogue, inform policy and systems development, and enrich community capacity. It aims to be part of the efforts to address longstanding issues through a culturally framed, asset-based approach. *La Cultural Cura Healing Generations* integrates this healing-informed approach into education; engagement; delivery of prevention and/or intervention services; and service aftercare, as a vital first step in reducing life-threatening outcomes for Latino and Native boys and men.

Recommendations for What We Need to Thrive. Through *La Cultura Cura Healing Generations*, funders, practitioners and the communities impacted by historical racial oppression possess a framework to translate culturally grounded tenets into systems transformation. To bring this framework to scale, a comprehensive approach is necessary that includes policy and systems change, best achieved through the following recommended actions:

Programmatic Recommendations

1. Increase programmatic support for integrating a healing-informed framework that focuses on fostering natural opportunity factors and building resilience;

2. Develop pathways to health and well-being for Latino and Native males through culturally grounded and responsive physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development;

3. Support NLFFI and other community-acknowledged Latino and indigenous organizations to develop and evaluate best practices, comprehensive community strategies, and program models that directly address what we call "Chronic Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD)," while encircling the individual, families, and entire community in healing, restorative, and development processes;

4. Train all personnel working in all levels of educational, criminal justice, mental health, health and social services in the culturally based, healing-informed approach for serving Latino and Native men and boys, so those systems can recognize and adapt their efforts to be more responsive to the Latino and Native males they are charged to serve;

5. Support programs which promote the involvement of Latino and Native mothers and fathers in the schools. Education is the foundation for economic mobility in the U.S., as well as an important and healthy pathway for the integration of immigrants into society;

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6. Support the development of NLFFI's generational "*Compadre*" extended-kinship networks and "*Circulo*" healing, support groups to provide positive indigenous male support for young men in all communities.

7. Inform mental-health and social-service providers including practitioners, supervisors, agencies and funding sources of the benefits of using this framework to better serve the needs of their clientele, by utilizing cultural assets that Latino and Native families and communities possess.

Systems Recommendations

1. Acknowledge within the Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) field that, for Latino and Native males, the path to healing (*La Cultura Cura*/Culture Heals) and healthy development is inextricably linked to restoring one's true cultural identity and recognizing the origins of unhealthy and maladapted behaviors.

2. Shift the BMoC field from the present deficit-based paradigm that is dominant in the field, to one which is healing-informed, through strategies that place the individual, family, and community as the priority in the implementation of healing and restorative strategies.

3. Promote intercultural exchange and learning across the BMoC field to establish culturally based best practices that foster comprehensive responses and/or frameworks, while recognizing the legitimacy of diverse tenets of culture, distinct experiences, and world perspectives of different racial and cultural groups.

4. Review and reinforce the development of cultural-proficiency standards that lead to practices and professional standards and policies in service delivery systems that reach and engage Latino and Native boys and men. The goal of this effort is to identify and eliminate discriminatory standards that impede the serving of vulnerable groups in education, shelters, hospitals and clinics, and other similar settings.

5. Shift social services and the helping field to understand that developing cultural proficiency in any profession requires ongoing education and introspection in order to fully address the power imbalance between providers and the populations they serve. Additionally, introduce the concept of cultural humility as a way for providers to better serve Latino and Native males (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998).

6. Prioritize policy and systems change that improves cultural humility of K-12 education.

Funder Recommendations

1. Target public and private funds for investigation, research, and demonstration directed at unearthing the unique needs and cultural capital of Latino and Native males.

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2. Increase public and private investment support for schools and other community-based educational models that teach cultural humility with academic rigor and prepare students for participation in the workforce and vocational training.

3. Increase public and private investment support for schools and other community-based strategies that promote the civic and economic advancement of immigrants within the U.S.

4. Leverage philanthropic support of NLFFI to cultivate the collective impact that can be achieved through community-based organization partnerships that align comprehensive community-building strategies among public agencies, safety net providers, local schools, adult schools, community colleges, businesses, and labor.

What We Know

Leading philanthropic organizations such as The California Endowment and the Ford, Robert Wood Johnson, W.K. Kellogg, California Community, Sierra Health and Liberty Hill foundations have sounded the clarion call on the crisis state in the welfare of boys and men of color across the nation. Nationally, the demographics of our nation are changing at an accelerated pace. According to the Urban Institute, ethnic minorities now make up 46 percent of all children. By 2023, the majority of American children will be people of color.[i] The number of Latino children under age 18 living in the United States has doubled in the past two decades, making Latinos one of the fastest-growing segments of the national population. By 2035, one-third of all American children and youth will be Latino, and it is projected that by 2050, one-third of the overall population will be Latino. Today's 16 million Latino children and youth—92 percent of whom are U.S. citizens—represent a crucial segment of our country's future workers, taxpayers, parents, citizens, voters, and leaders (National Council of La Raza, 2010). Despite this demographic presence, funding to address the health and socio-economic disparities Latinos face is sparse, and support through targeted funding that builds culturally relevant programming to better serve the Latino populace has been minimal. To address these disparities, this Brown Paper serves to elucidate a process for moving from trauma-informed care and service systems to a culturally specific, healing-informed model for service delivery to inform the provision of funds and resources to provide focused attention on the needs of Latino and Native boys and young men.

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The Need for a Culturally Relevant, Healing-Informed Approach

A substantive body of literature exploring health and socio-economic disparities, disproportional exposure to violence, and resultant trauma facing boys and young men of color is rapidly amassing.[ii] These research efforts have served to legitimize "Boys and Men of Color" (BMoC) as a field of inquiry, greatly advancing contemporary thinking and universal responses that surround young men of color. Additionally, the BMoC field has identified gaps in knowledge and informed the field on the causes of and solutions to disparity and disparity-induced trauma. Despite these efforts, the reality is that the majority of these investigations and program development has focused most intensively on African Americans, thus marginalizing the specific culturally based needs of Latinos and Native populations, and other communities of color. Although the needs of African Americans are significant and deserve ongoing attention, plainly stated, there are essential knowledge and funding gaps in the present body of work that do not address the experiences of other populations of boys and young men that reside in communities throughout the U.S, specifically Latino and Native boys and men.

The term "Boys and Men of Color" (BMoC) serves as an umbrella for a variety of ethnicities and cultural groups, including African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latinos, Native American/First Nations and biracial or multi-ethnic people.

Brown Paper: Four Foci

Foundational to the concepts presented in this Brown Paper is an understanding of who Latinos are, as a people or a culture. The "Latino" identity in American society is often viewed as monolithic. But in fact, the term Latino casts a wide net and includes people from many countries and cultural traditions that are similar but also distinct in very important ways. Certainly, in California, the Latino population includes people from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Puerto Rico and other countries. On the East Coast and other areas of the country it may include a heavier concentration of people from Cuba, Puerto Rico, or other Latin American countries. Those specifically from Mexico and Central America, who make up the majority of the Latino population in the U.S., have ancestral indigenous cultural roots tied to this continent, with a long history of colonialism and deep-seated oppression, while at the same time having a culture that is based in indigenous resiliency and healing. Also, the forced assimilation (Western acculturation) away from their culture and spirituality, in essence has demolished the authentic self and spirit of Latino and Native boys and men; the resulting disequilibrium is so profound that it transforms

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and affects all areas of their life. Accounting for one's true culture and spirituality is a foundational element in the assessment and healing processes when working with and assessing the needs of Latino and Native populations. *Race matters, but it is culture and its associated traditions that truly defines a person's and group's identity and strongly influences the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.*[iii]

This Brown Paper is divided into three sections and builds upon this context of multiplicity to expand the existing national dialogue beyond the African-American/White binary through addressing the following four areas of focus:

1. The importance of understanding the unique or distinctive origins, nature, and contemporary realities of trauma for Latinos and people of Native origin, an area thus far overlooked and neglected by the field;

2. The need to move beyond trauma-informed to healing-informed (*La Cultura Cura* – Culture Heals) approaches, models, and comprehensive strategies;

3. The acknowledgement of Latino and Native origin populations culturally based healing, restorative, and developmental processes and models;

4. Proportionality – given the magnitude of the Latino population, the emerging field of boys and young men of color must work collectively to develop and implement culturally relevant and comprehensive strategies with the needs of Latinos and Native populations at the forefront.

A Foundational Understanding of Trauma and Healing for Latinos and Native Populations

Origins and Contemporary Realities of Trauma and Healing for Latinos and Native Populations

Culture is the mother of vision. Developing people need to rediscover the life-preserving, life-enhancing values and insights of their own traditional experience. They need to understand [history] what happened to them as a people—what forces and changes made the world the way it is today. Every culture within it contains pathways for healing, healthy development, seeking new visions of human possibility…these must be vigorously and systematically pursued…articulated and connected to the hearts and minds of the people.

- Phil Lane Jr., Four Worlds International Institute

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Understanding the unique and distinctive origins and contemporary realities of trauma and healing for Latino and people of Native origins is an area overlooked by the BMoC field and the broader dominant society. If the field is to progress in an authentic manner, especially with regard to understanding intergenerational disparity-induced trauma, the investigation, research and discovery process must be pursued with absolute intellectual honesty and viewed through an interdisciplinary lens. The true imperative for the BMoC field is to establish a cross-cultural prism that strives for well-reasoned and comprehensive responses to the needs of BMoC and its frameworks for best practices, while also recognizing the legitimacy of the distinct historical and contemporary experiences and worldview of distinct ethnic and cultural groups. This paper will introduce a theoretical framework to better understand trauma of Latino and Native males, and introduces the concept of incorporating *a healing-informed approach* (Carrillo and Tello, 2008). By utilizing this sociocultural perspective, a stronger foundation can be established to serve as the basis for the development of strategies and practices for boys and men of Latino and Native origin.

Social/Historical Trauma. Although it is not necessary to dwell on all the tragic details of a shared history of conquest, cultural domination, oppression, discrimination, poverty, and categorical marginalization at every level (i.e., social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual) that have been commonly endured by people of color, it is important to acknowledge that while Latino, Native American, and African-American boys and men share some critically important commonalities, the experience by these communities is not identical. Also, it is important to note that the history that accounts for the basis of the trauma that came in a variety of direct and indirect means by the dominant culture in its attempt to "conquer" the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual identity of the indigenous Mexican and Latino people, is rarely recognized in the research literature (other Latino subgroups also have a history of colonialism). History records a literal genocide resulting in over 50 million men, women and children being killed, millions being subjugated in socio-economic subservience; and thousands of women and children raped. This is compounded by a cultural genocide where sacred writings, historical documents, laws and codes of conduct, sacred sites, and art were destroyed… along with the distortion and disharmony of traditional values, customs, ceremonies, and spiritual teachings (Leon-Portilla, 1986). Unfortunately, this is a history that is never talked about or considered in the trauma-informed approach to Latino boys and men.

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Certainly slavery, systemized dehumanization, segregation, and generations of enduring racial discrimination are a legacy of the African-American experience that continue to plague our African-American brothers. Today, there is, according to lawyer and scholar Michelle Alexander, "the New Jim Crow" that has redesigned the criminal justice system to continue to marginalize and oppress African Americans (The New Jim Crow, The New Press, 2012). In fact, the prolonged exposure to chronic disparities related to poverty, legally or culturally sanctioned inequality, injustice, discrimination, segregation, and forced acculturation are common legacies of all BMoC, and is a shared root cause of intergenerational trauma. Simultaneously, the cultural diversity and complexity within the broader spectrum of what is defined as Black, Latino, First Nations, or biracial/multiracial people in present-day America has yet to be addressed by the BMoC field, and local service providers are still waiting for the field to address the unique needs of their community.

For the many Latinos who share ancestry with sovereign First Nations people on the greater continent, it is critical to recognize the legacy of conquest, annexation of ancestral lands in the Southwest, and the prolonged subjugation of native cultures, along with an ongoing history of racial discrimination, socio-economic marginalization, or draconian immigration practices in explaining and responding to trauma. Concurrently, many Latinos experience a daily dose of trauma associated with constant perceived state of siege due to such factors as social alienation, mistreatment, precarious understanding of legal rights, or the constant specter of deportation. History will better understand the effects of social and political targeting of Latino families that creates a sense of being under siege in some areas of the U.S. However, the helping and healing-informed field does not enjoy the luxury of time to understand what the present climate does to individuals, families, and communities that suffer in relative silence while the power structure and media crafts messages and policies to further marginalize them from a healthy civic and economic environment.

Many families and children with origins in impoverished and war-torn or violent homelands (e.g., Central America and Mexico), also experience a continuum of intergenerational trauma. The trauma experienced by the parents and children prior to arriving in the U.S. is compounded by the all-encompassing life transition of migration and its corresponding acculturation to a new broader dominating culture. This is further exacerbated by the static disparities of poverty and the completely new stresses of cultural adjustment they face as families. Children of immigrants from diverse homelands and non-English -speaking homes (e.g., Spanish and/or non-Spanish regional indigenous dialects) must navigate at least two worlds: the traditions and experiences they share with their family, and a life of negotiating their own cultural, social, and educational journey that is unknown to or not understood by their parents[iv]. A critical challenge for immigrant boys and

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young men of color is their lack of connection or growing disconnection with their immediate families and cultural community, as well as the difficulty of working to assimilate to a broader unknown culture that introduces customs and behaviors that may supplant cultural assets that build strength and resilience. The harm of assimilation and acculturation can be profound if it is not recognized and understood by parents, youth and providers. For both native-born and immigrant Latino boys and men the familial, communal, social, cultural, and spiritual support structures and traditions that foster healthy development and well-being are absent from their daily lives (Acosta, 2007). Compounded by the profound legacy of racism, discrimination and xenophobia waged against Latino immigrants, the trauma induced by this reality is a pervasive, toxic, chronic circumstance experienced from one generation, leading to the following generation's unmentioned and unseen trauma. This cycle perpetuates a history of oppression and the source of intergenerational trauma that is less understood over time, but whose effects are ever present.

Current Reality. Contemporary mainstream research acknowledges and reaffirms what communities of color have known for generations: Race and poverty are inextricably tied. Latinos disproportionally experience high rates of poverty and discrimination-related disparities that include low educational attainment, sub-livable-wage employment, victimization or death from violence, more frequent contact with the criminal justice system, incarceration, incidence of substance abuse, and overall poorer quality of life and health outcomes than members of other cohorts. For Native American men and boys, the stats reveal a more dire set of elements.

More than one Latino child in three (35%) is poor compared to one white child in eight. Children born poor are less likely to finish high school, more likely to be poor as young adults, and less likely to be working between the ages of 25 and 29. That Latino teens are currently more than twice as likely to drop out of high school (Chapman et al., 2010), coupled with risk resultant from exposure to protracted poverty limits the life prospects of high school dropouts. Consequently a larger share of Latino children are facing a decade of crisis in America (Snyder and Dillow, 2011) that maintains the current reality in which Latinos now represent the majority population in juvenile detention centers and prisons. This reality will affect the prospects for future national prosperity if left unaddressed.

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While there are universal facts and commonalities in the root causes of disparity and trauma faced by communities of color, each has its own unique history and cultural prism that guides a path to healing, reconciliation, and wholeness. To be sure, Latinos and African Americans share some important common elements in history, disparity, and life outcomes. However, the failure to move research and prescriptive strategy development beyond the universal to the specific will fall short of changing the effects of the root causes of the crisis. Interventions designed to serve all populations will accordingly overlook the inherent strengths and assets that each group possesses.

How We Move Beyond Trauma to Healing: *La Cultura Cura* (Culture Heals)

The BMoC field has yet to focus substantively on the critical distinctions of cultural experience and cultural resiliency to advance the understanding, specific remedies, and sustained well-being of Latinos and/or Native Americans. The prism of Latino and indigenous native culture includes values of virtue; principles of honorable conduct; family and community-building traditions; core spirituality inextricably tied to all aspects of culture; indigenous perception of healing practices and sustaining well-being. All of these attributes are critical to truly understanding and finding remedy for trauma and its root causes for both Latinos and Native Americans. Any complete body of knowledge will need to recognize the legitimacy of *Latino and Native-Origin Populations Culturally Based Healing, Restorative, and Developmental Models*.

The universal definition of trauma gleaned from contemporary research lays a basic foundation for understanding symptoms. Expanding the understanding of trauma through a public health approach, RAND and the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice at Drexel University establish the connection between prolonged exposure to disparities and the presence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a seminal contribution to the field. It is widely recognized that PTSD disproportionately affects boys and men of color. What is rarely acknowledged is that indigenous populations experientially collect a disproportionate depth of knowledge and familiarity with untreated trauma. In Latino culture it is referred to as "*susto*" or a sense of shock or fright to the spirit. From a trauma-informed perspective, constant exposure to negative social conditions,

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limited economic factors and the prevalence of violence in daily life produces trauma (John Rich, et al., 2009). Further compounding traumatic exposure for Latino children and their families is omnipresent racism, discrimination and xenophobia waged against Latino immigrants. These risk factors for complex trauma are elucidated by the understanding that, "nationally, Latino adolescents have 4.1 times greater odds of having PTSD than white adolescents" (Kirkpatrick et al., 2008). In addition, a foundational element of PTSD for both Latinos of indigenous descent and more recent immigrants is the forced separation from the cornerstone tenets of culture and unacknowledged ancestral connection to this land as resources for healing.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder infecting an individual who experiences significant trauma and/or lives through a dangerous event or period. Based on the trauma framework presented here, we authors challenge the premise that trauma manifests solely from a single incident or period, as suggested by "post" in PTSD. Instead, for communities of color, trauma is pervasive, ongoing, and chronic in nature. In this paper, we offer the concept of "Chronic Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD)" (Carrillo and Tello, 2008) for consideration, wherein the absence of cultural connectedness manifests intergenerationally among individuals, families, communities, and institutions. Tello defines CTSD as the resultant state of being for someone experiencing constant exposure to disparity-related stress and stressors, traumatizing to his or her healthy physical, emotional, mental or spiritual development and well-being. CTSD becomes magnified when the trauma is broadly and collectively experienced by individuals, families, and communities and manifests intergenerationally. Moving beyond the concept of "post" to an understanding of the significance of chronic traumatic exposure exacerbated by cultural disconnection is a call to shift paradigmatic thinking from Western values and precepts to embracing indigenous healing-centered approaches for Latinos and other BMoC.

Additionally, what is rarely acknowledged or understood are the indigenous healing elements that Latino and Native American people practice daily, such as the use of herbs (*hierbas*), healing massage (*sobadas*), healing remedies (*remedios*), and religious-spiritual ceremonies and rituals. The very same healing practices that were categorized as "folk medicine" or witchery for many years are now legitimized by dominant society as "holistic health." Similarly, indigenous populations gather in circles of prayer, healing and reconciliation as part of their restorative process as a part of who they are. At the grassroots and community levels, indigenous traditions such as *Danza Azteca* (bilateral healing) and traditional drumming (sound healing) are ways to stay connected to ancestral wisdom and processes for maintaining mental and spiritual health. Traditionally, these practices were utilized to welcome home and reorient warriors from the community, returning from battle or people impacted by major trauma. Returning and incorporating these healing traditions into daily practice is a critical step toward reconnecting

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with one's sacred self while living in a world of stress and trauma. In another form, young lyricists, vocalists, rhymers and rappers provide a powerful contemporary example of these tenets, where they attempt to "spit" out the negativity they experience as a way of coping and making sense of their reality. Some recognize these youth as talented because some young rappers leverage this practice into professional success, but more often the purpose for this talent is overlooked— as intuitive attempts to cope, survive, heal and speak their truth, which in turn gives voice to others and heal unrecognized trauma.

Existing Best Practice Frameworks

A number of best practice frameworks exist that support culturally based trauma and healing-informed work, indigenous holistic philosophy, program models, and restorative processes specific to Latino and Native boys and men. These serve as instructive building blocks for new research, comprehensive models, and community-building strategies in the field of BMoC. At the base of any movement in this direction must include an understanding of the complexity of the challenges that face Latino and Native boys and men. Brown Paper co-author and director of the NLFFI, Jerry Tello, offers the *Psycho-Cultural Digressionary Scale*, a five-step process accounting for the manifestations of trauma that impact the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual identity of indigenous people. This theoretical framework proposes that the intergenerational trauma (racism, discrimination, omission) and forced re-acculturation has resulted in the distortion of traditional values, customs, ceremonies and spiritual teachings for Latino and Native boys and men resulting in poor health outcomes. "By destroying a purposeful and self-aware identity and replacing it with a 'false self,' the injury and dysfunctions are passed on from generation to generation and manifested as violence (i.e., interpersonal, familial, and communal violence), gang culture, delinquency, maladaptive behavior, social dysfunction, premature and ill prepared initiation of family formation and health issues as well as alcohol and substance abuse," (Tello, 1996).

Deeper consequences of this trauma are seen every day in a historical, multigenerational distortion of Latino boys and men's "true" way of life. For many, a total disequilibrium has occurred, destroying a harmonious, interdependent identity and replacing it with an internalized oppressive "false self." The trauma-induced maladaptive behavior, social dysfunction, and health issues suffered by individuals infect families and communities and self-replicate intergenerationally. Perhaps one of the worst outcomes of this prolonged oppression is that we see many Latinos themselves today believing that these negative, maladaptive behaviors and dysfunctions, such as domestic violence and gang violence, are part of their own cultural identity— a spirit-destroying lie that evokes deep hopelessness, nihilism, self-hate, and

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internalized shame that causes some to deny their cultural identity and connection to their own people.

Psycho-Cultural Digression: The Process of Internalized Oppression

The pathway for Latino and Native boys and men from childhood to manhood is a constant battle with unique characteristics falling along different points on their journey. There is a definable range of digressive behaviors for Latino males who are removed from their authentic worldview. It is necessary to acknowledge and understand the reality of the damage that occurs during the imposition of an oppressive dominant worldview and the maladaptation that occurs due to the supplanting of authentic culture along with prolonged exposure to the pressures of an oppressive society. The following *Psycho-Cultural Digressionary Scale* describes the stages and degree to which Latino males have lost a sense of their true selves and a connection to their roots. It also delineates to what degree Latino males have internalized the shame and maladaptive characteristics born of a society that doesn't accept them for who they are, passing distorted identity, cultural falsehoods, and related dysfunctions from one generation to the next. It is imperative that we begin to understand the magnitude and dimensions of the problem so we can rebuild the essence and spirit of boys and men in our communities. The following is offered not as a categorical formula to "diagnose" a population, but serves as a guide toward understanding the depth of the issues.

STAGE I: PSYCHO-CULTURAL CONFUSION

This is a state in which the multigenerational effects of oppression confuse the boys and men of all ages as society rejects them for who they are. They experience cultural dislocation, which denies them the culturally based instruction of values, norms, traditions, and rites of passage that bridge healthy adolescent development in preparation for responsible manhood. At the same time, when society does not acknowledge the sacred identity of young and older men, it diminishes the importance of their culture and reinforces the negative stereotypes of false Latino manhood. Internally, it stimulates a sense of psycho-cultural confusion, many times manifesting in maladaptive reasoning and behaviors such as "reactive aggression." Although their spirit knows that the aggression or violence they are manifesting is culturally inappropriate, they feel the need to respond to society's attempt to destroy their true essence. This coupled with the dearth of positive men (due to males struggling economically; being caught up in gangs, violence, or substance abuse; or the disproportionately high incidents of incarcerated and deported fathers or adult relatives) to protect or instruct them in "true" knowledge of the culturally rooted building blocks for becoming an honorable man (*un hombre noble*), they manifest their distress in several ways:

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- Insecurity often masked by boastfulness and inconsistent behavior;
- Vulnerability manifested by an intrigue of those in "power;"
- Cultural shame, or denying one's culture, history, and family.

STAGE II: INTERNALIZED ANGER

Unresolved psycho-cultural confusion results in feelings of frustration, manifesting in intense anger by the frustrated Latino male seeking explanation for being treated disrespectfully, blamed, or looked upon in a negative way without warrant. In addition, with their elders absent or wounded themselves, unavailable to impart corrective guidance, or filter the trauma (forced acculturation/assimilation), many boys and young men begin to feel insecure and question their *destino* (purpose in life) or what it means to be an honorable man. Furthermore, without the traditional extended support and healing systems (*compadre/*extended kinship networks*,* healing traditions*/ temezcallis* or sweat-lodge ceremonies) in place, their inadequate feelings are internalized and manifested in several ways:

- Generalized apathy (unmotivated)
- Generalized fear (rigid, withdrawn)
- Hypersensitivity (reactive, moody)

STAGE III: INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION (HATE)

At this point in the digression process, boys and men begin to believe that the oppression and mistreatment by society is deserved and a consequence of their own inadequacy and cultural dysfunction. These beliefs and negative self-perception further validate their reactive, aggressive, abusive, and maladaptive behaviors. Unconsciously, they begin integrating many oppressive processes: community and domestic violence, infidelity, and negative coping methods (drugs, alcohol, fleeing) as a maladaptive way of attempting to survive and to maintain their "value." To justify their behavior, they blame the victims. People at this stage encircle themselves with others who similarly have wounds and distorted world perspectives. That reinforces their behaviors such as:

- Distrust in self and others (controlling, jealous)
- Anger turned outward (hostile, acting out)

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- Self-harm (using drugs, alcohol, violence)

STAGE IV: DISSOCIATIVE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR (SELF-HATE)

At this stage, the oppression has been internalized so deeply that the expectations of male behaviors and treatment of women, children and each other are based on the false, imbalanced sense that perpetuates the cycle they have inherited. The cultural shame is so pervasive that people develop a general mistrust, dislike, and avoidance of others who look like them. They transfer this hate into symbols of colors (red vs. blue vs. black), regions (Norteños vs. Sureños), neighborhoods, blocks or territories. Gang violence, men fighting each other, and women being attracted to the most violent or aggressive men are all symptoms of people at this stage. Individual day-to-day survival becomes the focus, and a systematic process of separating oneself from one's actions, and the harm caused by them, is common. People at this stage have trouble differentiating between self-sabotaging and life-enhancing behavior, manifesting in the following:

- Anger turned inward (self-destructive behavior, cutting, addictive behaviors)
- Overwhelming anxiety (self-sabotaging behavior)
- Established alternative rules (survival, faux codes of conduct)
- Fatalism (lack of hope, nihilism)

STAGE V: PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL AMNESIA (RAGE)

At this point, boys and men have no recollection or memory of their true cultural authenticity. They believe their negative adaptive behaviors are part of their cultural expectations. This occurs many times when children are born into a family that is functioning at Stage III, IV, or V, where adults are not able to transfer to children the true cultural expectations of being *un hombre noble* (a noble man), of being a *persona con palabra* (a person with credibility and sense of their word), honoring elders, respecting women and protecting the children. Therefore, children grow up with a false sense of who they are and what they should be, and many times this is reinforced by society. Rage-based, destructive behavior (gang rapes, incest, and indiscriminate drive-by shootings) is a symptom of full-blown psycho-spiritual amnesia and spills into stereotypically hating people from other oppressed populations as well (race-based discrimination and violence).

A total cultural disequilibrium and resulting maladaptive behavior are symptoms of a deeper, self-denigrating, spiritual identity violation. This greatly defines the circumstance of Latino males in the context of social-historical oppression, impacting not simply individual boys or men, but the family and community as well. Further marginalizing the healing and rebalancing process are the

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present-day oppressive processes that continue to torment Latinos and other people of color. Things like the intensified immigrant bashing, English-only movements, banishment of culturally based academic instruction and curricula, "zero tolerance" policies in schools, in all grades, street gang injunctions aimed at young men of color, and other fear-based campaigns, serve to make general society believe that immigrants and/or Latino gang members ("or anyone that looks like them") are destroying "their community." Such factors combine to make it exceedingly difficult for culturally based practitioners to focus on the problem behaviors of individuals without addressing the impact of the ongoing societal trauma in which they live. The justification for avoiding this trauma is to identify young men only as perpetrators and never as victims of long-present trauma, disequilibrium, and pain. Any attempts by community teachers or healers to re-root the imbalanced, pain-ridden men or boys toward their true manhood identity by using culturally based teachings, traditions or ceremonies is often seen by mainstream practitioners as ethnocentrism or anti-American and not directly dealing with the problem behaviors. In addition, the so-called experts in the fields of violence, mental health, juvenile justice or education (academicians, researchers, policy makers) often control the funding and definition of what is acceptable theory, practice and intervention (evidence-based practices based on culturally neutral metrics), thus directly and indirectly continuing the oppression that has been perpetrated on the Latino community for generations. Never asked nor answered is the question of when does a boy who is victimized by untreated trauma become the perpetrator of acts that require the full force of expulsion from school or detention and long-term incarceration? In essence, when does a boy become the man for whom redemption will never be accepted?

La Cultura Cura, or Culture Heals, is a path to healing and healthy physical and emotional development which is inextricably linked to restoring one's true cultural identity as the foundation of well-being for individuals, families, communities and society alike. This is achieved through a process of learning and/or remembering one's true cultural values, principles, customs, and traditions. This is the path that leads to responsible and healthy manhood. The "Indigenous Culturally Based *Cultura Cura* (Latino) Indigenous Model," must be culturally syntonic (living in accordance with one's authentic self and beliefs) if it is to achieve healthy development, restoration, and life-long resilience in boys and men. Finally, *La Cultura Cura* may be an individual and their family's best tool to stall or avoid the negative health outcomes that they experience the longer they live in the U.S.

While this Brown Paper focuses on the Latino and Native experience, the principles and theory of change are interchangeable across communities because the foundational place of culture equally applies. At the same time, the principle of intercultural learning and exchange across professional paradigms must be a central tenet to discovery of best practice in BMoC developmental strategies:

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Namely, developing an understanding of and fostering respect for: 1) what is shared in common; 2) what is unique to each experience; and, 3) what can be done collectively to heal people of all roots and create healthy communities. It is precisely because communities of color share distinct histories of oppression, common disparity, and complex injury to individuals, families, and communities, that best practices require moving beyond generic trauma-informed models to one that directly incorporates indigenous forms of healing that restores and builds resiliency.

Finally, the field presently lacks adequate or proportional investment in investigating culturally competent, community-based research and demonstration of best practice models for Latinos or Native Americans. Although not recognized or acknowledged, there exists an array of Latino culturally centered holistic strategies and program modalities addressing youth development, fatherhood, teen-pregnancy prevention, family and community violence, delinquency prevention, education, remedial education and training, substance abuse, criminal and juvenile justice re-entry, community development and employment, immigrant integration, and health and mental health which must be explored by the literature on boys and men. Until recently there has been very little investment of resources in helping bring these culture-positive interventions to the fore. Even more insidious is the promotion of best practices developed for other dissimilar populations and then mandating their transplantation into communities of color. The often-cited rationale for this practice is that these specialized interventions lack the support afforded through peer-reviewed publications and academic journals (a condition that may reflect the limited number of Latino researchers that have navigated and succeeded in academia in the U.S).

Existing Capacity: The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI)

The **National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI)**, a division of the National Compadres Network, is a leader in the field with respect to these issues. Their innovative healing-informed *La Cultura Cura Healing Generations* framework provides a process that transforms the experiences of Latino and Native men and boys, their families and communities beyond trauma to thriving. Through culturally relevant programming, network- and capacity-building, and systems transformation, the *Cultura Cura Healing Generations* model represents a self-sustaining framework aimed at acknowledging and developing a resource-rich cadre of experts and elders that can transform national dialogue, inform policy and systems development and enrich community capacity. *La Cultural Cura Healing Generations* integrates healing-informed approaches to education, engagement, service delivery and aftercare as a vital first step in reducing life-threatening outcomes for Latino and Native boys. However, to thrive in health, education, and in the workforce requires replacing deficit-based trauma-informed approaches that focus solely on

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what is wrong and moving to embrace innovations in the field of boys and men of color with a healing-informed framework and lens (Carrillo and Tello, 2008).

Additionally, NLFFI recognizes the need for system and policy reform that places the concerns of Latino and Native boys and men at the forefront. Foundational in the development of a culturally relevant systems approach related to the needs of Latino BMoC is the need to build the capacity at the programmatic level to respond. This healing framework focuses on building upon natural opportunity factors and resilience, inculcating what is right based on culturally grounded physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development, health, and placing the principles of well-being as its foundation. Within this approach is the socio-historical framework that facilitates a deeper understanding of multigenerational trauma, the process of building a healthy community, and examples of best practice models of NLFFI and National Compadres Network. This framework serves as instructional evidence for developing a comprehensive frame for establishing a Latino Indigenous Model for boys and men of color and facilitating investigations that focus on capturing the effects of this approach on males and their families. Finally, this paper concludes with a series of recommendations to the field that can prepare us as a society to truly embrace Latino and Native boys and men as equal members of the BMoC field.

HEALING INFORMED APPROACH. Recognizing the depth of the issues therefore points to the need to target resources to encircle the entire community in healing, restorative, and development processes that are based in a culturally grounded approach rooted in authentic indigenous identity, values, ceremonies, traditions, and principles of healing and well-being innately connected to the people themselves.

A healing-informed approach based on the philosophy of *"La Cultura Cura"* involves a fundamental belief among a broad cross-section of Latinos and other indigenous practitioners that within the nature and cultural identity of individuals, families, and communities, exists the knowledge and "medicine" (capacity) necessary to heal from trauma, recalibrate essential lifestyles, and maintain one's well-being. *La Cultura Cura* healing principles include an understanding and embracing of the "gifts and baggage" (trauma and resiliency) as the basis for recovery, reconciliation, remediate development, and flourishing.

HEALING GENERATIONS. An indigenous worldview rooted in an interdependent social ecology recognizes that, whatever we do in life as individuals and communities, impacts the next seven generations, but also carries the legacy of previous generations as well. For true healing and development to occur, it must be intergenerational in scope, including children, youth, adults, and elders. The NLFFI curriculum therefore targets boys, men and their families at various points in the circle of life. The centering medicine or process is the *Circulo de Hombres* where elders, men

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and boys gather to connect, heal, teach, learn and recommit to their "true" values of *El Hombre Noble* (the Noble Man).

Beyond Trauma-Informed, To Healing-Informed Practice (*La Cultura Cura*)

As presented in the previous sections, in order to truly address the multidimensional needs of Latino and Native boys and men the approach must be based on a philosophy and process that goes beyond reacting to the identified problem and its symptoms, to a clear comprehensive restorative framework built on the inherent resiliency-based qualities of the culture itself (*La Cultura Cura*). An overview of the rationale and underlying principles for moving from a trauma-informed individualistic approach to a healing-informed multigenerational framework is presented here, defining a philosophical framework that is shared in the traditional story form in the indigenous way of the culture.

The Healing Tree Philosophy (Carrillo and Tello, 2008)

Since the beginning of time, families, communities, and societies of all cultures have had to confront issues that appeared to threaten the very essence of their purpose. Even in those times, when there seemed to be no hope for revitalization, the wisdom of the ancestors and the elders provided a way.

Traditionally in all communities, there was a "sacred tree" where individuals, families, and the community as a whole would gather. That tree, the symbolic focal point, rod of life or spiritual altar, in more recent times, is seen in churches, synagogues, community centers, or in the home of the community healer/leader. Where this "place of the tree" truly served its community purpose, it became the reference point from which one gained clarity of purpose, healing and strength. It then was the role and responsibility of each person and family to take the spirit of this "tree" (values, identity, guidance) into their home and to instill its meaning into the members of their family. It is for this reason that many Latino families, even today, have a spiritual altar in a special place in their homes. Similarly, *mandas* (pilgrimages) are often offered, frequently at great physical and monetary expense by individuals and families that seek healing from physical and mental conditions. These are examples of practices that are still present today that represent the symbolic spiritual focal point of the healing tree.

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At the same time, it was very evident to all that the "weak wind," the "coyote spirit," or negative influences of the world were, and remain, a constant threat to the harmony and balance among the individual, family and community. It was for this reason that families and communities began to understand that in order to survive and grow, they, like the tree, must continually be watered or re-grounded in their sacred roots and in the positive principles of their people.

Men, women, and elders therefore gathered in familial and communal circles as a manner of honoring and keeping in harmony with those life-affirming principles. In these circles, and through regular practice of positive ceremonies, traditions, and customs, the culturally based principles for balanced living were taught, reinforced and strengthened. The principles provided the way for the individual, the family and community to carry out their larger purpose in life; the ceremonies and traditions assured that they were taught and maintained.

Various tribes and subgroups of indigenous people have developed interpretations of these principles and ceremonies based on the particular "way" of their rooted ethnic spirit. Although ceremonial expression of these rituals and principals differ, depending on the particular region and/or tribe, it is found that ethnic-centered people of all roots have gathered, and continue to gather, in circles… men, women, family, community, to strengthen, rebalance, and maintain harmony and to re-root themselves in the principles of the *Sacred Healing Tree Philosophy* (Carrillo and Tello, 2008).

The Healing Tree (Carrillo and Tello, 2008) is the symbolic basis for a philosophy that emphasizes the need for a positive, centering foundation (roots) of principles that assist men and women of all ages to maintain balance and guide them in their honorable development. This philosophy is also used to illustrate the various elements as in the parts of a tree that impact an individual and family/community (positively or negatively) that can be used to regain and maintain individual, family and/or community health and well-being .

Five Elements of the Healing Tree

For a positive "reflective mirror" to the five stages of the digressionary scale, we offer the five elements of the Healing Tree.

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ELEMENT 1: PURPOSE (*DESTINO*) BASED ON INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY/COMMUNITY DIGNITY (*DIGNIDAD*)

A basic premise of individual, family and community dignity acknowledges that within the ancestral wisdom of a people are the teachings and medicine necessary for development, healing, and growth. It is understood that the teachings and healing elements inevitably come from the people themselves. Although the initial incentive may come from an outside entity (e.g., institution, organization, funding source), the base philosophy and ongoing motivation for individual, family, and community growth and rebalancing must come from within the circle of those who desire or need growth or change. Communities must be trusted (and guided by sanctioned elders) to use their own processes to reestablish this without the confines of Western frameworks and guidelines.

ELEMENT 2: RESPONSIBILITY BASED ON RESPECT (RESPETO) FOR FAMILY/COMMUNITY VISION

Individuals must have a vision that reflects the potential of their *true self* in reference to their family, community, and greater society. Those who have only a negative view of themselves and their culture (internalized oppression), have no avenue for true growth or development. A person's primary *cultura* or ethnicity is the root of their vision. It is necessary for the person to be guided and connected to this essence to allow them to dream, reflect, and rediscover the life-enhancing values and gifts of their own indigenous culture. As part of this process it is necessary for one to know and understand their history in order to comprehend the process that created their present situation. By this process, and with the proper guidance, a boy or man will be able to identify and separate the pain and dysfunction that he and his people are experiencing and distinguish it from the essence and strength of his true sacred culture (healing-informed). As part of their indigenous heritage, all people have ceremonies and rituals for clarifying and rediscovering this vision of growth, which are integrated and practiced in a balanced, consistent manner guided by sanctioned elders committed to this process.

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ELEMENT 3: INTERDEPENDENCE BASED ON INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY/COMMUNITY TRUST (*CONFIANZA*)

The strengthening of a community, and the families within it, directly enhances the development and healing of its individuals; in essence their success is intertwined. As individuals heal and grow, they are able to reintegrate with the positive vision of the broader collective community. Families, communities, and the individuals within them must heal and develop interdependently at a multigenerational level. If one element is missing, disharmonious growth occurs, which leads to false hope, the manifestation of dysfunction, and flawed development. It is essential to know the difference between co-dependence, individualism, and indigenous cultural interdependence and trust (*confianza*). The Mayan concept of *En Lak Etch* literally translates as "you are the other part of me" and is the basis for this process. The redeveloped interconnectedness (via the restoration of traditional kindred *Circulos*), interrupts the succession of generational destruction and pain and initiates a commitment to generational healing and development. This restores health or wholeness— individual by individual, family by family, community by community.

ELEMENT 4: DEVELOPMENT OR CIRCULAR LEARNING BASED ON LOVE (CARINO) FOR LIFE

A love for life is the basis of a circular learning process. As times change, people must learn "new" ways (based on ancient teachings) to live in the world as individuals, families, and communities. There must be pride in one's ethnicity and respect for those of all roots. Applying ancient principles of *cariño and respeto* (love and respect) to contemporary reality in American society requires us to embrace the principle of "inter-cultural learning and exchange" or "pluralism" as a central tenet to learning and development; namely, learning what is shared in common, what is unique to particular experiences, understanding and respect of differences, and what can be done collectively to heal people and create healthy communities. These new ways must be both life-preserving and life-enhancing. In addition, organizations, institutions and dominant societal communities must also learn to live in new ways (incorporating multiple cultural perspectives), be willing to reconsider the basis of their philosophy, policies and procedures based on the needs of the community, and reexamine tenants or rules that are seen as immutable to engender fairness and opportunity. Elders from all communities must gather in communion (*Circulo*) to offer spirit and agency to connected multicultural efforts focused on the love, healing, and mutual respect of the next seven generations.

ELEMENT 5: ENTHUSIASM, OR LIVING LIFE WITH A SENSE OF SPIRIT (*ESPIRITU*)

For many ancient indigenous traditions, there is no separation between spirituality and all other dimensions of culture. Living life with a sense of spirit or spirituality (*espiritu*) allows individuals, families, and communities to approach life with an element of enthusiasm (*ganas*). Instilling or re-

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instilling that sense of hope and passion in individuals, families, and communities allows one to deal with the difficult, and sometimes overwhelming, day-to-day pressures, or chronic traumatic stress with a sense of "greater spirit," to preserve and succeed, and not to simply succeed to create a pathway away from the family, community, and cultures.

The teachings of the Healing Tree philosophy are not "new" but are based on ancestral and rooted teachings from indigenous cultures. There are parallel teachings and frameworks in other indigenous cultures as well. By drawing on the Healing Tree as a philosophy, we offer a comprehensive framework that can serve as the basis for a *Healing-Informed Approach* of individual, family and community transformation. Recognizing that disparity, its associate trauma and dysfunctions create complex barriers to healthy development for boys, restorative change in young men, and intergenerational brokenness for adults and elders. The five healing tree principles (i.e., Purpose, Responsibility, Interdependence, Development and Enthusiasm, or PRIDE) offer a cultural pathway to re-rooting and re-centering the behavior and spirit of young and older men. It also points to the need for policies, systems, organizations and funding sources to change, as well, and to be open to culturally fluent community-based avenues for healing, growth and development.

Acknowledging Efficacy of Latino and Indigenous Culturally Based Model

In 1988, spirited by the sacrifice and inspiration of the civil rights and Chicano movements and distressed by the continued strife and pain being experienced by Chicano, Latino and Native populations, a group of Latino and Native men held a weekend gathering in Jolon, California to pray, dialogue, and make a commitment in traditional ceremony to address the needs of their families and community. These men were able to create a refuge within that space to begin to heal. From this gathering, a core group of men made a commitment to take responsibility collectively to begin a journey of healing and development for themselves and future generations. The result was the reestablishment of a traditional community healing and cohesion process known as the *Circulo de Hombres*, Circle of Men (extended kinship network). The healing, rebalancing, and accountability process was reintroduced with the purpose of restoring pathways for initiating rites of passage into the community fabric and lives of Latino and Native males. Collectively, through these inter-generational traditional kinship circles of caring, nurturing, and mutual accountability, a social structure in community was recreated to guide the journey from boyhood to responsible adulthood. The voice and wisdom of the ancestors and the elders was reestablished to guide men and boys to their "true" self once again.

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From this a core group of men began the National Compadres Network whose mission was to establish circles of support from respected peers in communities across the nation to provide a place for boys and men to heal from the wounds of oppression and the day-to-day stressors of life, and to take responsibility for guiding the next generations as *hombres nobles* (noble men) and as responsible partners in recreating healthy families and communities. There are now in place over 100 *Circulos* and thousands of *compadres* who have participated in the *Circulo de Hombres* across the country and have integrated the principles of *El Hombre Noble* (Seven Principles of a Noble Man). Unbeknown to the organizers of this movement was that they were employing the first precept in the Healing Tree community development process: the reestablishment of their Purpose/*Destino* based on Individual/Community Dignity**.**

With the *Circulo de Hombres* as the base for the last 25 years, the National Compadres Network (NCN) and its interconnected faculty of "*maestros*," or trained community teachers, have devoted their efforts to addressing the needs of Latino boys, men, their families, and community. The organization also recognized that in order to truly impact the ongoing well-being of Latino boys and men, NCN would need to aggressively promote the fourth element of Healing Tree by assisting "organizations, institutions and dominant societal communities to learn to live in new ways incorporating multiple cultural perspectives, willing to change their philosophy, policies and procedures based on the needs of the community." To achieve real inroads on a macro scale in high-impact communities, this demanded a profound paradigm shift, a major transformation in organizations and the systems that propose to educate and serve Latino men and boys. By establishing the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI) as its training and technical assistance arm, NCN began a process of capacity-building and advocacy for the needs of Latino boys and men. NLFFI today has a growing cadre of trained elders, master teachers (*maestros*) and young men as instructors who continue to inform and guide these efforts.

At the same time, NLFFI recognized that for Latino and Native men and boys to be authentically represented and served, the field must acknowledge the legitimacy of Latino and Native *Culturally Based Healing, Restorative, and Developmental Model and Curricula*, and thus invested accordingly in bringing these models to scale. Attaining proportional investment in Latino male-specific research, model, and strategy development has been an uphill battle to say the least. The element of cultural fluency is fundamentally critical for efforts focused on Latino males. This is especially true given that the Western approach to addressing the many manifestations of disparity-induced trauma that uses a linear and box-oriented framework to its investigations research, categories, interventions, and evaluation. Conversely, the traditional indigenous way is to look at things not in terms of good or bad, victim or perpetrator, but in terms of balance and harmony, and the circular nature of life. It makes it incumbent on those serving boys and men on their road to healing,

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finding balance, and becoming a *hombre noble*, to create the organic agency in communities to break this cycle of inheritance. In the kinship circles of healing, accountability, and support, everyone brings their gifts (*regalos*), baggage (*cargas*), and redemptive lessons as part of the healing, restorative, and development process of *Cultural Cura*. At the same time, the lack of truly culturally based programs and interventions, at any level, necessitated the development of curricula to address the multidimensional needs of boys and men at every developmental stage.

NLFFI has developed a number of specific culturally based healing-informed program models and community-building strategies. These programs include curricula for young men (Joven Noble Rites of Passage); teen and adult fathers; incarcerated men and boys; father/son literacy; parents, grandparents, mothers raising boys; and specific interventions that address a multitude of problem areas that face Latino boys and men. The healing and developmental approaches address critical areas such as anger management, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, relationship violence, racism, gang violence and oppression (see list of curricula on website). At the core of all the programs and curricula are the structural supports connecting to a "*circulo de hombres*" where elders, fathers, young men and boys gather to heal, guide, follow and learn how to connect with other men of all ages, thus bringing them closer to their true sacred selves. Through these inter-cultural learning/support circles, traditional events, and ceremonial practices, people from various subcultural ethnic backgrounds are connected as one to heal, in responsibility to guide subsequent generations, and in service to the community.

On the policy and systemic levels, NLFFI brings together culturally proficient, nationally recognized leaders in the fields of fatherhood, rites of passage, health, education, family violence, teen pregnancy prevention, cultural humility, juvenile justice, social services, advocacy, trauma, healing and evidence-based research. NLFFI works in partnership with community leaders and decision makers to create strategic and sustainable systems of change and provides support in the areas of training; technical assistance; capacity building; policy and systems change; research; leadership development; and resource and material development.

Conclusion

This Brown Paper serves to elucidate literature which legitimizes Boys and Men of Color as a field of inquiry. Though making profound steps toward addressing race-based disparities, the degree to which the BMoC field has invested in Latino and Native American males is debatable. Given the relative population growth and glaring disparities impacting Latinos, the time is now to deepen the body of knowledge and resources allocated toward addressing Latino and Native boys and men. The failure to move research and prescriptive strategy development beyond the universal to

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the particular will fall short of changing the crisis Latinos and other ethnic populations face. Ignoring or overlooking this significant population will engender a climate that will not serve the future prospects of the U.S., and will tax the resources that are needed to make investments that serve the collective good of this nation.

Culturally relevant innovation and capacity currently exist and require replication to fully inform and prevent disparity impacting Latino and other ethnic boys and men. Through the *Cultura Cura Healing Generations* framework proposed herein, funders, practitioners and the communities impacted by race-based disparity possess a framework to translate culturally grounded tenets to systems transformation. To bring this framework to scale, a comprehensive approach is necessary that includes policy and systems change, best achieved through the recommended actions that follow.

Programmatic Recommendations

1. Increase programmatic support for integrating a healing-informed framework that focuses on fostering natural opportunity factors and building resilience,

2. Develop pathways to health and well-being for Latino and Native males through culturally grounded and responsive physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development,

3. Support NLFFI and other community-acknowledged Latino and indigenous organizations to develop and evaluate best practices, comprehensive community strategies, and program models that directly address "Chronic Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD)," while encircling the individual, families, and entire community in healing, restorative, and development processes.

4. Train all personnel working in all levels of educational, criminal justice, mental health, health and social services in the culturally based healing-informed approach for serving Latino and Native men and boys, so those systems can recognize and adapt their efforts to be more responsive to the Latino and Native males they are charged to serve.

5. Support programs which promote the involvement Latino and Native mothers and fathers in the schools. Education is the foundation for economic mobility in the U.S. and an important and healthy pathway for the integration of immigrants into society.

6. Support the development of NLFFI's generational *"Compadre"* extended kinship networks and "*Circulo*" healing, support groups to provide positive indigenous male support for young men in all communities.

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7. Inform mental-health and social-service providers including practitioners, supervisors, agencies and funding sources of the benefits of utilizing this framework to better serve the needs of their clientele, through the utilization of cultural assets that Latino and Native families and communities possess.

Systems Recommendations

1. Acknowledge within the Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) field that, for Latino and Native males, the path to healing (*La Cultura Cura*/Culture Heals) and healthy development is inextricably linked to restoring one's true cultural identity and recognizing the origins of unhealthy and maladapted behaviors.

2. Shift the BMoC field from the present deficit-based paradigm that is dominant in the field, to one which is healing-informed, through strategies that place the individual, family, and community as the priority in the implementation of healing and restorative strategies.

3. Promote intercultural exchange and learning across the BMoC field to establish culturally based best practices that foster comprehensive responses and/or frameworks, while recognizing the legitimacy of diverse tenets of culture, distinct experiences, and world perspectives of different racial and cultural groups.

4. Review and reinforce the development of cultural proficiency standards that leads to practices and professional standards and policies in service-delivery systems that reach and engage Latino and Native boys and men. The goal of this effort is to identify and eliminate discriminatory standards that impede the serving of vulnerable groups in shelter, hospital, clinic and similar settings.

5. Shift the social services and helping field to understanding that developing cultural proficiency in any profession requires ongoing education and introspection in order to fully address the power imbalance between providers and the populations they serve. Introduce the concept of "cultural humility" as a way to better serve Latino and Native males (Cultural Humility Versus Cultural Competence, Tervalon, et. al., 1998)

6. Prioritize policy and systems change that improves cultural humility of K-12 education.

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Funder Recommendations

1. Target public and private funds for investigation, research, and demonstration directed at unearthing the unique needs and cultural capital of Latino and Native males.
2. Increase public and private investment support for schools and other community-based educational models that teach cultural humility with academic rigor and prepare students for participation in the workforce and vocational training.
3. Increase public and private investment support for schools and other community-based strategies promoting the civic and economic advancement of immigrants within the U.S.
4. Leverage philanthropic support of NLFFI to cultivate the collective impact that can be achieved through community-based organization partnerships that align comprehensive community-building strategies among public agencies, safety net providers, local schools, adult schools, community colleges, businesses, and labor.

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In indigenous culture it is said that our actions today will impact the children for seven generations. It is with that forethought and vision in mind that we as a society must approach this very critical work. It will necessitate collective consciousness that moves beyond the confines of relying on policies and frameworks that are based on a linear way of looking at issues and responses to one that recognizes the interconnected nature of all that we do. From a societal framework that is deficit-oriented and fear-based focusing on dysfunction and trauma to one that places at the foundation the aspects of restoration, healing and cross-cultural leadership. In addition, it requires us to not forget the historical legacy of the pain associated with discrimination and racism that is still alive and present today. This was demonstrated by the intense nationwide response triggered in instances of clear injustice such as the acquittal of officers in the Rodney King beating, the unjustified shooting of Oscar Grant by law enforcement, and the slow response to the killing of 17-year old Trayvon Martin. Equally as damaging are the rarely mentioned incidents of violence and oppression that immigrants face daily when they are intimidated and physically harassed and tortured by immigration officials and law enforcement and the economic despair that Latino immigrants face when they are cheated from their earnings because offenders know they have little recourse through the legal system due to fear. It is where old injustice unites with new injustice to awaken and remind those who don't live with this reality daily that we still have much work to do. The profound impact that this has had was not only felt by African Americans or Latinos, but by all who have in the past and today struggle with a legacy of growing up or being connected to a boy or man of color. And finally, it is time that we do a true inventory of who we are demographically, as a society, and who we will be in the future. If we do that honestly we will see the need to continue focusing on the needs of African Americans but, at the same time, make a priority the needs of Latinos, Native Americans, Asians and other boys and men of color proportionately in all aspects of what we do, not as an afterthought or in futuristic planning, but as a necessary core of all that we do.

We must take on the challenge of expanding our lens to one that acknowledges and incorporates not only the needs of all boys of men of color but also the "medicine" and solutions that lie within the cultural traditions of all people. When we do this, we will truly recognize the power of the Mayan teaching of *En Lak Etch* (you are my other me) where we begin to rebuild a society of interconnected love, commitment, accountability and responsibility to oneself and to one another.

Authors:

Jerry Tello and Frank Acosta

With Contributions From:

Ricardo Carrillo, Juan Gomez, Diane Lopez-Wilson, Anna Nelson,

Lauren Padilla-Valverde, Refugio Rodriguez and Héctor Sánchez-Flores

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NOTES

[i] Robert D. Reischauer, "Today's Children, Tomorrow's America: Six Experts Face the Facts." (Urban Institute, 2011) 7.
[ii] John Rich, et al. "Healing the Hurt: Trauma-Informed Approaches to the Health of Boys & Young Men of Color." Drexel University School of Public Health: Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice and the Drexel University College of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine, 2009.; Lois M. Davis, et al. "Reparable Harm: Assessing and Addressing Disparities Faced by Boys and Men of Color in California." Rand Corporation, 2009.
[iii] The concept of Pan-Latino: the umbrella concept of Latino/Hispanic; signifies individuals with ancestors from Latin AmerJican countries including Mexico, Central America, South American, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. Many Latinos have mixed African, European, Asian, and/or Indigenous Ancestry.
[iv] Frank de Jesus Acosta, The History of Barrios Unidos, Cultura Es Cura (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2007).

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