

# count on CHANGE 2010

## CENSUS TALKING POINTS

### Why African Americans and Other People of Color Must Participate in the 2010 Census

- **WHAT IS THE CENSUS?**

The Census is a count of the entire population of the United States.

- **WHEN IS THE CENSUS CONDUCTED?**

The Census takes place once every ten years. The last Census occurred in 2000. The next Census will take place next year, on April 1, 2010.

- **WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE CENSUS COUNT?**

The U.S. Constitution requires an actual counting of the entire population, which includes non-citizens. Therefore, everyone counts in the Census, regardless of age or citizenship status, including immigrants, non-citizens, babies and the elderly.

- **HOW IS THE CENSUS TAKEN?**

The Census count is based on the answers provided in the Census form mailed out to all residences in the United States. The form should be distributed and received by all households in March 2010. Completed Census forms should be returned by mail to the Census Bureau by April 1, 2010. At present, Census forms cannot be completed online.

- **WHY IS PARTICIPATION IN THE CENSUS VERY IMPORTANT?**

- **CENSUS DATA IS CRITICAL TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES TO OUR COMMUNITIES.**

The federal government allocates over \$400 billion each year based on population counts as determined by Census data. These funds include programs such as Medicaid; Head Start; vocational and employment services; foster care and adoption assistance services; and nutrition services.

- **CENSUS DATA IS CRITICAL TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL POWER.**

Census data is used to determine the number of seats that each state will have in the House of Representatives, and the number of votes that each state has in the Electoral College. Census data are also used in the drawing of election districts, and in making sure that election districts are roughly equal in size.

- **CENSUS DATA IS USED IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS.**

Census data is used in the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Census data is used to determine whether or not an election district affords African American and other minority voters an equal opportunity to elect their candidate of choice.



### UNDERCOUNTING

- **UNDERCOUNTING IS THE FAILURE TO COUNT SOME MEMBERS OF THE POPULATION.**

Every time the Census has been performed, the Census Bureau has failed to completely count African Americans and other people of color. Despite more resources and better planning, the 2000 census missed an estimated 16 million people and double-counted 17 million more.

- **THE UNDERCOUNT COSTS OUR COMMUNITIES.**

As a result of undercounting, African-American communities fail to receive the appropriate amount of funding proportionate to the actual population of residents in their districts. According to a study by PriceWaterHouseCoopers, the 2000 undercount cost communities across America an astonishing \$4.1 billion in federal funds. The average loss in those communities was \$2,913 per person.

- **AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE AT A HIGHER RISK OF UNDERCOUNTING AND MISCOUNTING IN THE 2010 CENSUS.**

The African-American community is specifically at risk of undercounting not only because they are people of color, but also because African-Americans have been disproportionate victims of foreclosure, incarceration, and hurricane displacement.

- In the 2000 Census count, African Americans were the largest racial or ethnic group undercounted.
- 628,000 African Americans were not counted by the Census Bureau. This number is almost equal to the entire African-American population of the state of Tennessee. In contrast, non-Hispanic whites were over-counted by an estimated 2.2 million people in the 2000 Census.
- 10% of all African-American homeowners are currently at risk of losing their homes.
- Hurricane Katrina displaced over 600,000 from Louisiana, half of whom were African Americans.
- A disproportionate percentage of prisoners in the United States are African-American: 1 in 11 Black adults in the U.S. are under correctional supervision, and Blacks are more than 7 times as likely as whites to be incarcerated.

- **AFRICAN AMERICAN VICTIMS OF THE NATIONAL FORECLOSURE CRISIS AND THOSE DISPLACED BY THE GULF COAST HURRICANES.**

In 2010, African American victims of the national foreclosure crisis and those displaced by the Gulf Coast Hurricanes will be at heightened risk of undercounting. Foreclosure victims may be in the process of moving, or may be reluctant to open their doors to strangers from the government. Those displaced by the Gulf Coast hurricanes may be in the process of rebuilding their homes, and might be missed by the Census.

- **THE INCARCERATED.**

There are 2.3 million prisoners in the United States, nearly 1 million of whom are African-American men. The Census counts these individuals in the prisons where they are incarcerated, rather than as residents of the communities where they lived prior to arrest. This method of miscounting artificially inflates population numbers where prisons are located, and has a particularly distorting effect on the distribution of governmental resources and political power to African American communities.

- **NON-CITIZENS.**

The census counts both citizens and non-citizens, including undocumented immigrants. Historically, undocumented immigrants have been undercounted. Difficulty with the English

language affects the ability of many individuals to understand and answer the census. Moreover, many non-citizens may be suspicious of government agencies and fear that responding to the questions in the census may result in their deportation or incarceration by immigration and law enforcement officials.

## **PARTICIPATING IN THE 2010 CENSUS**

- **COMPLETING THE CENSUS FORM IS EASY.**

One Census form is completed for the entire household. The form contains only 10 questions, and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The first 4 questions are about the housing unit (e.g., is it owned or rented); and the last 6 questions are about each occupant of the home (e.g., name, age, race, gender). Make sure to fill out the entire form. Once completed, the form can be mailed back to the Census Bureau in the accompanying pre-paid envelope provided.

- **THE CENSUS IS CONFIDENTIAL.**

All information provided to the Census is kept confidential – by law, it cannot be shared with other governmental agencies such as law enforcement, customs and immigration, or the IRS.

- **THE CENSUS BUREAU NEEDS ANSWERS FROM EACH HOUSEHOLD.**

The Census Bureau needs to receive responses from every household in the United States. Sometime after April 1, 2010, the Bureau will follow-up in person in order to obtain the responses from every address that does not mail back the form. Census takers will visit each of these homes and ask the same 10 questions on the census forms previously mailed out. A Census taker will have an official U.S. Census Bureau badge and will never ask to enter a home.

- **IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2010 CENSUS.**

Spread the word about the importance of the Census; organize a Census Day at a location in your community so that members of the community can fill out forms together; join together with others to work as temporary Census Bureau workers to assist with the 2010 count.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENSUS, INCLUDING TEMPORARY CENSUS EMPLOYMENT, CALL 1-866-861-2010.**

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