



Community Activation Network: CAN August 26, 2021 Meeting Notes

Members of the Community Activation Network (CAN) met via Zoom on August 26, 2021.

We welcomed **Karina Barillas**, Executive Director of La Casita Center; **Dr. Laura Escobar-Ratliff**, College of Social Work, University of Kentucky; and **Professor Enid Trucios-Haynes**, Brandeis School of Law, University of Louisville, to address **The Latinx View of Public Safety**. (You can see more detailed bios of our panelists [here](#).)

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Interview, discussion, and Q&A with our panelists, moderated by CNPE Director of Consulting, Ed Cortas
- CAN-DID Breakout Groups
- Closing

Welcome

Ann Coffey, CNPE CEO and CAN host, opened the meeting – extending a welcome to new members of the group as well as previous participants. She noted that CAN is a year old this month, and reviewed CAN's purposes. We will be publishing a document summarizing the discussion over the past months about public safety from many perspectives. Our quick poll of attendee demographics will be use for internal purposes only, with data aggregated.

The September meeting will be the last in the series on public safety – this time eliciting views from state representatives.

Ann shared that CAN Co-Host Anthony Smith was unable to attend due to two recent COVID-related deaths in his family. We extend our deep sympathy to his family and him. Ed Cortas is filling in as host.

Introduction and Opening Comments

Ed Cortas introduced our distinguished panel. You can see their extensive biographical details [here](#).

The three panelists then gave opening comments about public safety:

Karina Barillas on public safety:

Public safety is a pressing concern for marginalized community. Cannot hide from the feeling of being unsafe in homes, on the street, at work. Safety is a luxury and privilege that most Latinx people do not enjoy. Black and brown mothers are always concerned about whether the men and male children in their lives will come back. Being picked up by immigration police can happen randomly, just based on appearance. This also translates to great anxiety for children, who worry whether the adults in their lives will always be present – or disappear without warning.

Professor Enid Trucios-Haynes on public safety:

Most of community does not feel safe. Communities are isolated, which makes residents less likely to seek out social services and report crimes. Less trust in police makes for a cycle of distrust. Affects citizens, documented and undocumented alike. 65% of Kentucky Latin residents are U.S. citizens. ICE vans will stop randomly and check for papers, even during COVID.

Dr. Laura Escobar-Ratliff on public safety:

Multidimensional view of safety: personhood, being able to move freely, willingness to seek mental or physical health help. All hindered when communities are marginalized. Historical trauma varies a bit by status, but is rarely far away. Has seen traffic stops in the middle of the day just to check for citizenship status. Always aware of your brownness.

Personal vision includes a time when everybody, including those in power, understand the roles of power and privilege and how that affects all marginalized groups.

Ms. Barillas asked participants whether audience felt the need to carry papers other than a driver's license to be able to prove citizenship. To the "system," Latinx people all look undocumented.

Ed Cortas asked what initiatives have emerged to meet challenges?

Prof. T-H: The "Welcoming City" ordinance passed several years ago to stop cooperation between LMPD and ICE enforcement helped a little to overcome the presumption of foreignness. A good step, but not enough. Still a real prison-to-deportation pipeline. Other states have offices and commissions that address Latinx issues. We could use that here. Latinx population is growing rapidly; lack of representation is a continuing issue.

KB: We are in a worldwide pandemic. Our system is not prepared to provide meaningful access to services. Domestic violence cases get complex when the perpetrator or children are asked to serve as translator. LMPD acts burdened to ask for an interpreter. Kentucky is high on the roster of states with the worst child abuse. Latinx community an afterthought. Karina is perceived as a crazy, angry woman with a strange accent. Latinx people prefer to be invisible – avoid schools, doctors, service providers.

LE-R: Who is at the table? Burden to provide translators – what about non-Spanish indigenous languages? To provide good public safety measures, marginalized groups must be included, but not just to tick a box. They need power and a voice. Continual push to get to the table and to be heard and have ideas incorporated. Shouldn't be that hard if we care about public safety for all.

How can the nonprofit community support the initiatives that the Latinx community needs?

LE-R: Look at your table. Who is sitting with you? Senior leaders, executives making decision. If not representative, you have a problem. You don't know what you don't know. Experience is personal; it can't be inferred.

KB: Make sure the people you invite really know the community. Elites who have degrees and speak good English may not have a clue of the challenges of the other strata of the Latinx community, as they almost pass as white in many ways. Need to dig deeper. Ask the community, not professionals in that community. We don't have time for data – people are dying. Families are still being separated at the border. Workers in horticulture, construction, horse racing are invisible. No research/data is being done.

ET-H: Representation is indeed important, as is having documents in different languages and translators available. Language access is a civil right; any entity that receives federal funds should provide it. Even at the front desk, different languages should be accommodated. Being present in the United States and undocumented is not a crime. Again, need a varied voice to share the reality of people's lived experience.

CAN-DID Breakout Sessions

Participants were asked to consider these questions:

- What questions do you have? What more would you like to know?
- How can Louisville nonprofits engage with the Latinx community to increase public safety? What action steps can Louisville nonprofits take to be in solidarity with the Latinx community?

Responses:

ET-H: How to get the word out to the rest of the state? Many isolated communities of Latinx people in Bowling Green and other areas. Need to build bridges.

Ann Coffey: Diversity Task Force created by KNN. They are in that space as well as they can.

Kimberly Moore: Commonality between Black and Latinx community. Loss of life connected to gentrification. Cost in human life as Blacks had to move into Crips territory. Analogous to the Latinx community.

Mary Gwen: Reluctance to seek out services. How to get voices at the table in a safe way. Interpretation services seem to be a barrier. Need more ways to build trust.

LE-R: One strategy is to enhance collaborations. Who is coming through the doors vs. who is sitting at the table. If it's important, we will make time for it. Partner with groups who understand the community, like La Casita, to understand how to better reach the community. There should not be competition among non-profits – there is plenty of work to be done, and collaboration will help with that.

ET-H: Need to connect Black and brown communities because they share so many concerns. We all have work to do within our communities on educating ourselves and the need to support each other.

Is there a Latinx coalition locally?

KB: Nonprofits already stressed to capacity. Homelessness and pandemic concerns have taken up all the oxygen. Some collaboration with trusted Hispanic media, but to date there has not been the capacity to organize meaningfully. In survival mode.

Just making time to participate in the CAN meeting is a bigger sacrifice than you would think. Similar challenges for getting Latinx people to participate on boards of directors.

Edgardo Mansilla: Named some efforts at collaboration. There was once a Latinx coalition that disappeared 7-8 years ago. No current plans to create partnerships and coalitions. Idea is there, but no concrete plans now. Spanish is not a generic language spoken. Integration normally takes three generations. (Spanish language skills are often lost by then.)

ET-H: Pandemic has put most nonprofits in survival mode. Real lack of capacity, hard to get true Latinx providers to come together. Colonization = inclusivity. We need expansiveness to allow unique voice to be heard. We want children to know their history, even though parents had to shove a lot of that aside so they can fit into others' boxes.

CLOSING

Building coalitions is hard. Ann has been working with distribution of ARP money, where the need for coalitions keeps coming up.

At our September 23 meeting, we will hear from **Keturah Herron**, Policy Strategist for the ACLU of Kentucky; **Nima Kulkarni**, KY State Representative, District 40; and **Morgan McGarvey**, KY State Senator, District 19, as we consider the Kentucky legislature's public safety priorities. [You can register here.](#)