



African American Summit

A Deliberation on Education, Healthcare, and the Economy

BACKGROUND REPORT

- September 21, 2012, Albuquerque, NM
- 120 participants statewide

CONVENER

New Mexico Office of African American Affairs
www.oaaa.state.nm.us

FACILITATOR

New Mexico First

SPONSORS

Signature Level

New Mexico Martin Luther King Jr. State
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New Mexico Forum for Youth
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UNM Health Sciences Center
URENCO USA

Bronze Level

Office of the Mayor, City of Farmington
UNM Division for Equity & Inclusion
UNM Health Sciences Center, Office of Diversity

Community Scholarship

Roden Smith Pharmacy, Clovis, NM



NEW MEXICO FIRST

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FOREWORD

Purpose of the Report

This report will inform the *African American Summit: A Deliberation on Health, Education, and the Economy*. Participants are urged to review this report prior to attending the event. It is the hope of the organizers that this report also provides valuable resources to policymakers, educators, and advocates – informing future policies and practices affecting New Mexico’s growing African American population.

The **New Mexico Office of African American Affairs** is convening the summit, which will take place September 21, 2012 in Albuquerque, NM.

Office of African American Affairs

The New Mexico Office of African American Affairs (OAAA) recognizes the need for targeted intervention strategies that address and produce sustained results not only for African Americans, but all New Mexicans. With a purpose of developing and implementing strategies targeted to the specific disparity needs of families, the organization’s strategic plan is designed to give a greater voice and sustainability to the well-being of the African American community. Under original House Bill 909, the agency is mandated to increase awareness and understanding about multi-dimensional issues that contribute to disparities and successes relevant to African Americans in our state. The OAAA strives to develop an action-oriented agenda for disseminating key messages that aid in the decrease and prevention of disparities. It also strengthens collaborative networks that sustain on-going initiatives in the following focus areas:

- Advocacy and Policy
- Education Advancement
- Health Care Advocacy
- Economic Empowerment
- Community Development

The New Mexico State Office of African American Affairs was enacted by the 44th New Mexico State Legislature in 1999 under House Bill 909 and established by Executive Order under the administration of Governor Gary Johnson and continues to serve under the present administration of Governor Susana Martinez.

New Mexico First

New Mexico First co-authored this report and will facilitate the upcoming summit using its unique deliberative model.

The public policy organization engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, New Mexico First offers unique town halls and forums that bring together people from all walks of life to develop their best ideas for policymakers and the public. The nonprofit also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy, and energy – are available at www.nmfirst.org.

The state’s two U.S. Senators – Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall – serve as New Mexico First’s honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici (retired).

UNM Center for Education Policy Research

The **Center for Education Policy Research** compiled the data charts and maps that appear throughout this report.

The public policy organization is housed at the University of New Mexico College of Education. It strives for excellence in education through data-informed policy change. The center's mission is to:

- Research education policy topics of interest in New Mexico;
- Communicate knowledge about education policy to diverse audiences;
- Collaborate with policy makers and other researchers on systemic policy change; and
- Educate researchers and policy makers about the value of data-driven policymaking.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Context

People often think of New Mexico as a “tri-cultural state,” comprised of Hispanics, Caucasians, and Native Americans. While these groups do comprise the majority of the state’s population, African Americans remain an important part of the state’s cultural mix and a key aspect of its history.¹

While historians differ about when the first people of African descent came to this region, it is clear that Africans were here in the early 16th Century as explorers, guides, and slaves of “New Spain” (now Mexico).² When Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1828, slavery was outlawed. Freed slaves settled throughout the area now known as the American Southwest. In addition, African American pioneers were part of the western migration from the east coast and American south.³

After the American Civil War, the U.S. government dispatched to New Mexico eight companies of “Buffalo Soldiers” (the nickname given to African American army regiments).⁴ These soldiers helped stabilize the frontier. They performed garrison chores, patrolled the frontier, built roads, escorted mail parties, strung hundreds of miles of telegraph lines, and handled a variety of civil and military tasks.⁵ Today, the Buffalo Soldiers Society of New Mexico educates people about the historical contributions of African Americans in uniform.⁶

Reminiscent of the early days of the Buffalo Soldiers, the largest wave of African American

¹ Appreciation to Alfred Dennis Mathewson, UNM, for reviewing the Historical Context section.

² (New Mexico Office of African American Affairs 2006)

³ (New Mexico Office of African American Affairs 2006)

⁴ (New Mexico Office of the State Historian n.d.)

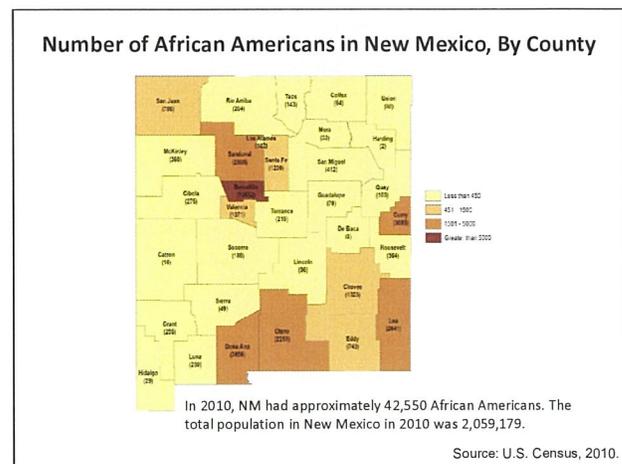
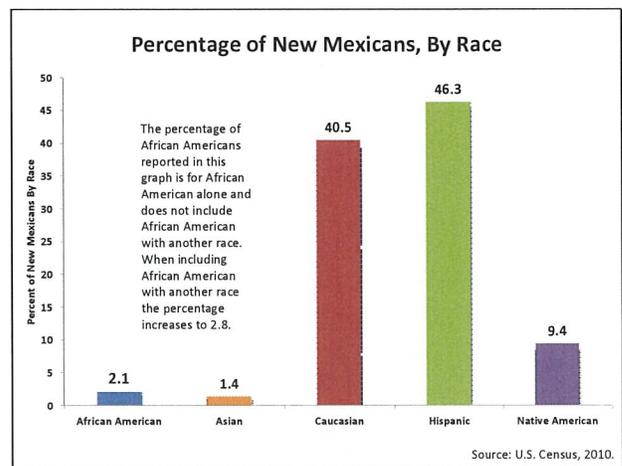
⁵ (Texas State Historical Association n.d.)

⁶ (City of Albuquerque n.d.)

migration to New Mexico came after 1970 due to the Army and Air Force.⁷ Many modern African American servicemen and servicewomen, and their families, have chosen to settle in New Mexico after completing their military service.

Modern Population

The percentage of African Americans in New Mexico is between 2% to 3% of the total population (compared with about 12% of the population, nationally). In 2010, the state’s African American population was estimated at 42,500.



⁷ (New Mexico Office of African American Affairs 2006)

Data

The Center for Education Policy Research collected the data presented in the charts and maps in this report. The full data set of more than 100 charts is available online at:

http://129.24.210.86/coe-images/cepr/OAAA_8.29.12.pdf

The Center for Education Policy Research also offered some cross-cutting recommendations for future consideration.

- Commit to gathering essential data and using it to improve the outcomes of all African Americans in our state. Some of the most important indicators may be currently unavailable.
- Develop an ongoing method or index to understand where African Americans are doing well and where there is a need for increased focus.
- Organize data-driven town halls with African Americans in counties where there is the greatest educational, economic, or health needs in order to develop local strategies.

Disparity issues are not isolated African American problems. They represent the greatest challenges facing our state. We hope this report and the upcoming summit will unite people of all races to discover ways we can collectively grow the healthy economy, educational network, and health system New Mexico needs in order to thrive.

--Yvette Kaufman Bell

OAAA Strategic Plan

The upcoming summit will influence the Office of African American Affairs' strategic plan. Relevant objectives from that plan are included throughout this report, focusing on three key areas:⁸

- Economic Empowerment
- Education Advancement
- Health Care Advocacy

These topics are critical to the future of all New Mexicans. Yvette Kaufman Bell of the Office of African American Affairs, interviewed for this report, discussed the need for collaboration.

“Disparity issues are not isolated African American problems. They represent the greatest challenges facing our state. We hope this report and the upcoming summit will unite people of all races to discover ways we can collectively grow the healthy economy, educational network, and health system New Mexico needs in order to thrive.”⁹

⁸ (New Mexico Office of African American Affairs 2013-2015)

⁹ (Bell 2012)

HEALTH

As a group, African Americans face a range of health challenges that affect quality of life and how long they live. The average American life expectancy is 78 years, compared with 73 years for African Americans.¹⁰ Leading causes of death among African Americans include:¹¹

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Stroke
- Unintentional injuries
- Diabetes
- Homicide
- Kidney disease
- Respiratory disease
- HIV/AIDS

New Mexico Health Data

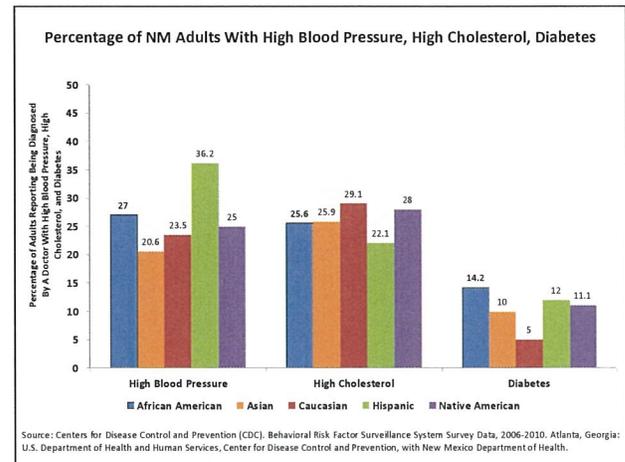
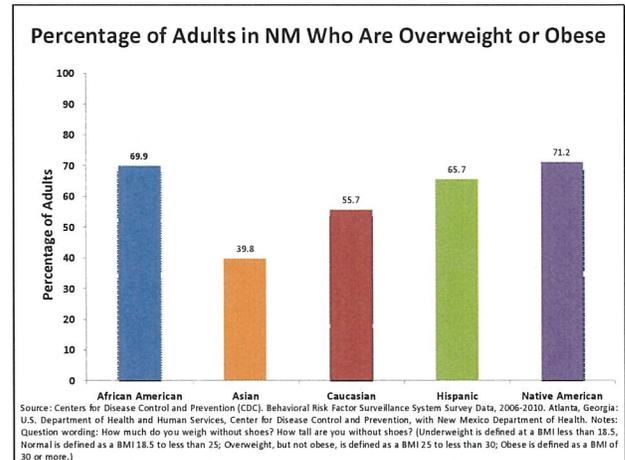
In New Mexico, and in the U.S., African Americans are more likely than the overall population to experience obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. (See charts, this section.)

Some of these problems can be prevented, or their severity reduced, through personal actions:

- Eating healthy foods
- Being physically active
- Taking diabetes medicine as prescribed
- Testing blood glucose levels
- Community education and support programs

Type 2 diabetes, sometimes called an “epidemic among African Americans,” can often be delayed or prevented through healthy behaviors.¹² Medical

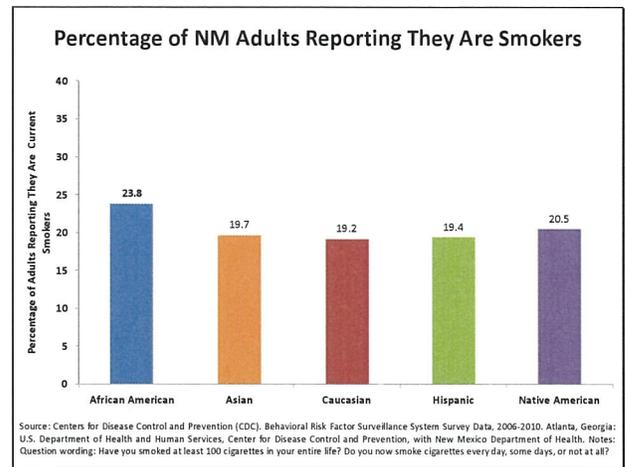
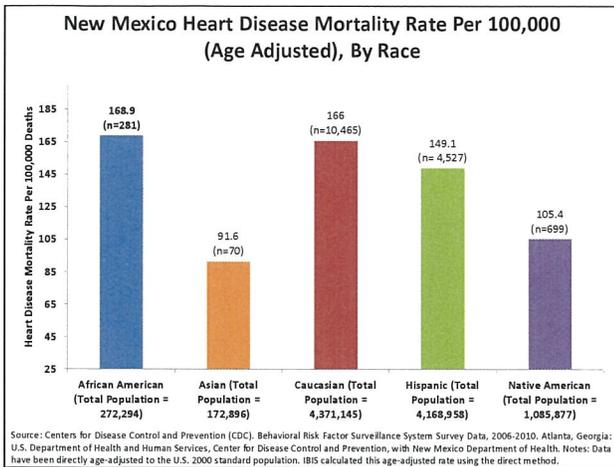
screening can diagnose “pre-diabetes,” enabling health professionals and patients to develop prevention strategies.



¹⁰ (Center for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.)

¹¹ (Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2007)

¹² (National Diabetes Education Program 2011)



Smoking

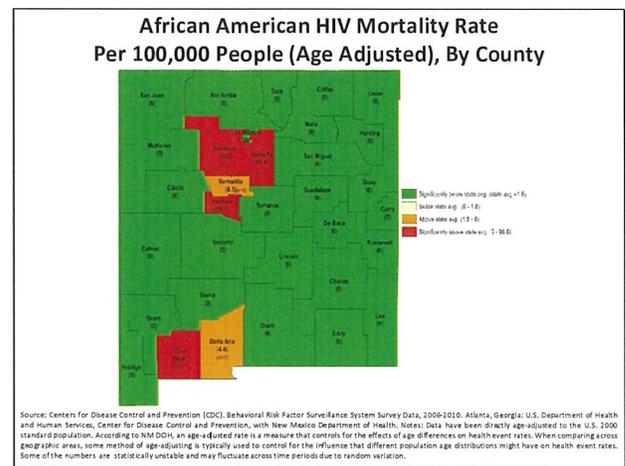
In New Mexico, African Americans are somewhat more likely to smoke than people in other racial groups (unlike nationally, where the percentages are about even).¹³

One of the concerns expressed by advocates is the marketing of cigarettes to African American youth, particularly menthol cigarettes (which researchers believe are the most addictive).^{14 15}

With funding from the New Mexico Department of Health, the African American Health Network directed a marketing and media literacy project, educating teens about the dangers of smoking, especially menthol cigarettes.

HIV/AIDS

Nationally, African Americans are more affected by HIV than any other racial or ethnic group. African Americans made up 14% of the U.S. population in 2009 but accounted for 44% of all new HIV infections.¹⁶ Men are at great risk, accounting for 70% of new HIV infections among African Americans.



¹³ (Center for Disease Control 2012)

¹⁴ (Wallace 2012)

¹⁵ (Science Daily 2009)

¹⁶ (Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2012)

Reproductive Health

African American women in New Mexico are less likely than Caucasian women to receive prenatal care during pregnancy. Of particular risk are teen or low-income mothers.

The infant mortality rate among African American women – in New Mexico and nationally – is alarming. African American babies are more than twice as likely to die in their first year of life than the population as a whole.¹⁷ Infants born in Uruguay, Botswana, Panama, or several other countries have a better survival rate than African American babies.

Causes of death include low birth weights, birth defects, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or health complications for the mother.¹⁸ The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends educating communities, providers, pregnant women, and family members on factors that effect infant mortality such as:¹⁹

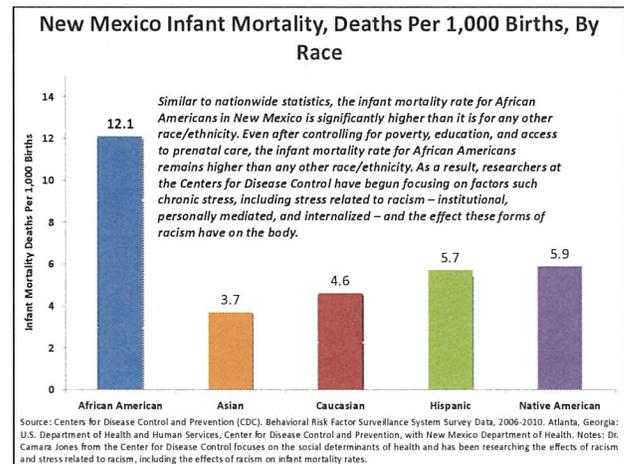
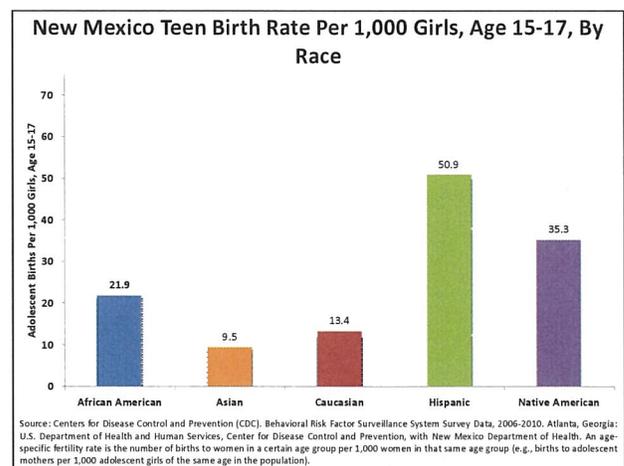
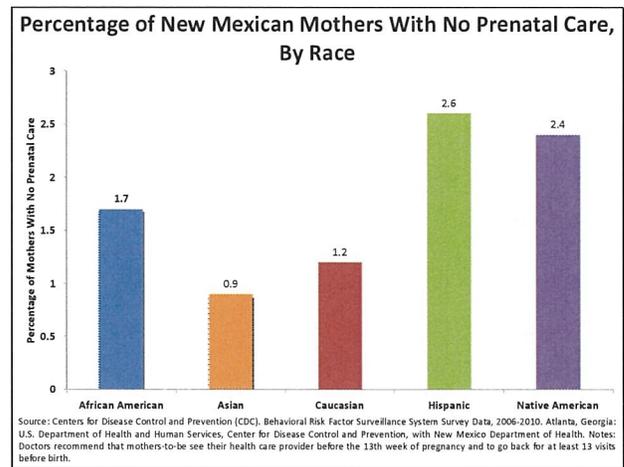
- Smoking
- Substance abuse
- Poor nutrition
- Lack of prenatal care
- Medical problems
- Chronic illness
- SIDS²⁰

¹⁷ (National Center for Health Statistics 2007, Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2007)

¹⁸ (Office of Minority Health 2012)

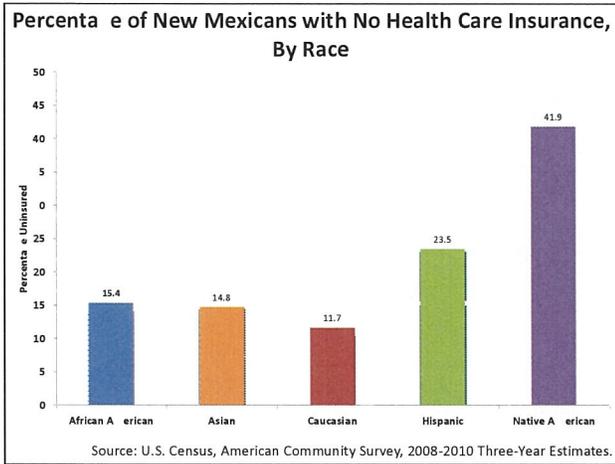
¹⁹ (Office of Minority Health n.d.)

²⁰ Research shows that babies who slept on their stomachs or sides were at a higher risk for SIDS.



Healthcare Coverage

About 15% of African Americans in New Mexico lack health insurance. Native Americans and Hispanics are far more likely to be uninsured in this state. These figures will presumably shift in the coming years, with the roll-out of federal healthcare reform.

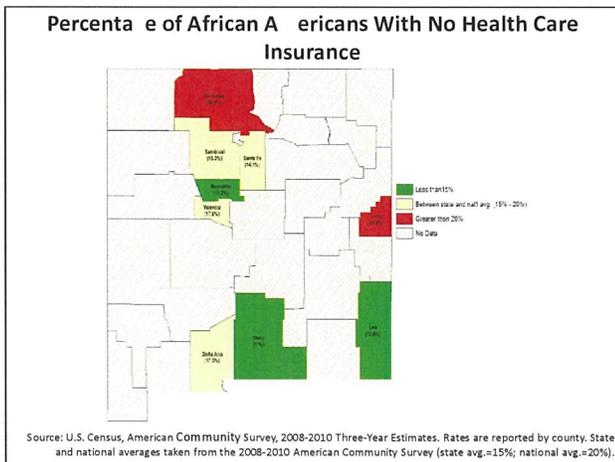


OAAA Strategic Plan Objectives

The Office of the African American Affairs has two objectives in its strategic plan on health.

Objective 6: Improve the quality of health for the African American community in the state of New Mexico

Objective 7: Work with institutions of higher learning to develop a strategy to increase the number of African American Students in health related academic fields of study



Please Note: For information reported on New Mexico African American economic and education data, visit the agency website at <http://www.oaaa.state.nm.us/index.php/2012-oaaa-reports>.