Addressing Tensions Between African Americans and Immigrants

Demographic, Historical and Political/Economic Dimensions

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Relations between groups

- Demographic
- Historic
- Political/Economic
Demographic

- Both groups growing in numbers across the country
- Coupled with youthful, growing African American population
- Both groups often living in same communities, attending same schools
Demographic

- Strong presence of Black immigrants in many traditional African American communities
  - In Boston: Foreign-born constitute one-quarter or one in four of Black population
  - In New York, Florida: Similarly high proportions ranging from one-fifth to more than one-quarter
Historic

- Often invisible in public discourse and news reporting on African Americans and immigrants
- History of Black America rich with stories of immigrants
  - Collaboration between representatives of Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L’Ouverture working with enslaved Blacks to expand slave rebellion in U.S. South
  - Huge influx of West Indian immigrants to NY, Boston, Philadelphia
Historic

- Leaders from both groups working together on civic, labor and economic initiatives
  - Working together to improve worker conditions
Historic

- Afro-Latino historical lens shows conflict and collaboration:
Historic

- Media emphasizes conflict, presents both groups as historically monolithic
  - Lack of knowledge of the role and impact of immigration in the Black community
  - Feeds into potential animosity and mistrust between groups that have much in common
Misperceptions over political divisions between immigrants and African Americans can:

- hurt both groups in the expansion of economic opportunity for all;
- create a competitive focus on jobs vs. supporting strategies for the expansion of living-wage jobs; and
- instead of economic partners, groups will see each other as adversaries.
Political conflict was easily encouraged by wealthier interests to keep profits up and wages down:

Strategies

- Moving from danger to opportunity:
  - Enhancing knowledge about the history and cultures of African American and immigrant communities
  - Public education about the history of racial and immigrant struggles for equality
    - Increase visibility of the common struggles that bring people and groups together
Strategies

- In MA, coalitions of African American and immigrant groups together seek:
  - Better working conditions
  - Access to health resources
  - Better schools for everyone

- Network of African American and Immigrant Solidarity
Stories

- Stories of struggles for a better life on the part of immigrant communities reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity of USA:
Stories

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