



John Daughtry, LOF Productions for Knight Foundation

**Rebecca Chavez, a native of Vayarit, Mexico, is a student in Ruben Tantillo’s citizenship class offered by Charlotte’s Latin American Coalition. She shared with her teacher a photo of son Edwin, 14, a high school student and ROTC member at Charlotte’s Waddell High School. He’s flanked by sisters Eva, 7 and Liduvina, 12.**

# Tempering the Immigration Debate: An Assessment of the American Dream Fund

A Reporter Analysis by Tony Mecia

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**American Dream Fund Assessment**

# **Tempering the Immigration Debate: An Assessment of the American Dream Fund**

By Tony Mecia

In March 2001, the results of the 2000 Census landed on the front pages of the nation's newspapers.

**"Surge in Minorities Alters Face of Wichita,"** blared The Wichita Eagle.

**"Minorities Change Look of Minnesota,"** said the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

**"Latinos, Asians Lead Statewide Boom; With Most Dramatic Racial Mix, California is America's Melting Pot,"** trumpeted the San Jose Mercury News.

From coast to coast, the newly documented surge in immigrants was changing communities.

Inside some of America's largest foundations – including Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York – staff members took notice of the new figures. They sensed, correctly, that the topic of immigration was hot, and they wanted to get involved.

In 2003, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation joined with Ford, Carnegie and others in a national effort to encourage immigrant civic participation, and a year later, Knight adopted a variation of that strategy: funding a wide array of local, grassroots nonprofits in Knight communities. Its name: the American Dream Fund.

When the national immigration debate culminated in 2006 and 2007 with rallies and intense political debates, some of the funded organizations were on the front lines, organizing marches. Others shied from politics and focused on local services such as legal clinics and citizenship classes.

Now, as Knight Foundation assesses the effectiveness of the American Dream Fund, it is doing so with new leadership and new program staff who are more skeptical of awarding grants to organizations explicitly involved in policy advocacy. They say Knight is redirecting the fund to focus more narrowly on naturalization.

As to the old focus, one that permitted and encouraged policy advocacy, foundation staff say they're unsure if dollars applied toward advocacy had any impact.

"There's always a question in my mind of proportion," said Damian Thorman, Knight's national program officer, who joined the foundation last year. "We spent millions of dollars. Did it make millions of dollars of impact? That's an open question."

A review of reports and interviews with nearly 20 people involved in all facets of the American

Dream Fund shows that:

- It does appear to be meeting its broad goals of helping integrate immigrants into the civic fabric of some of the Knight communities. Because of the loosely defined nature of engaging immigrants in civic life, the overall effect might be less than the transformational change the foundation seeks.
- The 47 funded organizations represent a wide cross-section of nonprofits, in terms of immigrant communities served and program interests. Some are interested in advocacy, some in providing services, some in both. Most grants in the first phase starting in December 2005 were for \$50,000 over two years. Public Interest Projects, which administers the fund, has determined that 18 of the 47 grantees do not work in areas related to naturalization. Funding of those groups will cease.
- Previous Knight Foundation staff was aware and supportive of the advocacy component of the program.
- American Dream Fund grant recipients report that they have become very active in networking and collaborating with national and local groups, according to the Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry, the hired evaluator of the program. Creating such links was described as a “key component” of the program at its inception. Grant recipients say their greatest need is for assistance in fund raising and other sustaining technical help.
- American Dream Fund grants went to 22 of the 26 Knight communities, not all 26 as envisioned. Public Interest Projects says identifying viable organizations that work with immigrants in some of the small communities was a challenge.
- Knight Foundation and Public Interest Projects underestimated the amount of staffing needed to oversee so many grants and to help grantees.

### **The strategy**

In 2003, Knight joined with Ford, Carnegie and others to launch the Four Freedoms Fund, designed to encourage immigrant civic engagement. A year and a half later, Knight redirected \$2 million of the Four Freedoms money, and pumped in an additional \$4 million, into the American Dream Fund.

Envisioned as the local component to the Four Freedoms Fund, the American Dream Fund intended to give small grants to local nonprofit organizations. According to the funding proposal that went to the Knight board on March 15, 2005, the purpose of the grant program was to “provide flexible funding to immigrant-serving organizations in Knight communities.”

According to that proposal, the funding was targeted to organizations that undertook the fol-

lowing activities:

- helping immigrants learn English and understand the naturalization process;
- preparing immigrants for citizenship;
- organizing immigrants around “critical social and economic issues and public policies;”
- engaging in nonpartisan voter education and mobilization;
- developing leadership among young immigrants; or
- holding events that promote relationship-building among people of different races, ethnicities and immigration statuses.

The funded groups were expected to work with Knight-funded national immigration networks by joining advocacy campaigns or by participating in conferences or group strategizing. They were also to be evaluated on how well they created networks in the local communities. The idea was that by joining together, the funded groups would better be able to integrate immigrants into their communities and have a more coordinated approach to advocacy.

The program was to be run by Public Interest Projects (PIP), an intermediary nonprofit that re-



Carl Juste, Iris Photo Collective, for Knight Foundation

Haitian Women of Miami (FANM) has serviced the greater Miami-Dade area since 1991 with the purpose of empowering Haitian women and their families socially, economically, and politically and to facilitate their adjustment to South Florida and the United States. Marleine Bastien is surrounded by the young students who attend a FANM after school program.

ceives money from Knight, then awards the grants. PIP was also administering the Four Freedoms Fund, and the foundation wanted to ensure there was collaboration between national and local groups. In addition, PIP had expertise and staffing Knight lacked.

When the American Dream Fund started, it was the third fund managed by PIP. The organization now has seven funds, and it devotes 1.5 staff members to the American Dream Fund. In 2006, American Dream Fund grants accounted for roughly 17 percent of the \$8.1 million PIP says it disbursed.

### **Where the money went**

The 47 nonprofits that have received American Dream Fund grants are a diverse group in terms of size, activities and the different races and ethnicities they serve. A 2007 Touchstone Center survey of roughly three-quarters of grant recipients showed that staffing size ranged from one half-time worker to 132.5 employees, and that budgets ranged from \$27,000 a year to more than \$6 million annually. The survey also revealed that more than half of grantees said they are multiethnic organizations, about one-quarter work only with Latinos, and one-fifth work exclusively another immigrant group.

The purposes of grants also varied. There's Boat People SOS, which received a grant to help Southeast Asian hurricane victims in the Biloxi area. The Philadelphia Arab American CDC received a grant to provide English classes and youth programming for Arabs. And Haitian Women of Miami used its grant to help low- to moderate-income Haitian women gain access to naturalization services.

Interviews with a small sampling of grant recipients show they believe that the funding was crucial to help them achieve their goals. Few foundations appear to be working in this area, and Knight-commissioned surveys show that immigrant-serving groups believe access to funds is one of their greatest needs.

PIP says it selected the grant recipients in Knight communities with the assistance of Knight program officers and local advisory boards. Although an April 2007 Grant Expenditure Evaluation audit by KMPG found that PIP "did not work with the Foundation's community Program Directors, as envisioned in the proposal," anecdotal evidence suggests that PIP staff did consult with Knight's program directors in at least some of the communities.

PIP employed different funding strategies in different communities. In cities with a long tradition of welcoming immigrants, there were often many organizations from which to choose, and PIP often directed the money toward smaller, newer groups working with underserved populations.

In these larger communities, the American Dream Fund often sought to put a small sum of money – typically \$50,000 over two years – into grassroots organizations that would make the most of it instead of into larger groups with less-critical needs.



In smaller communities the decision on which groups to fund was much easier.

“In some places, like Akron and Wichita, there were only a handful of groups that were obvious candidates,” said Channapha Khamvongsa, PIP’s American Dream Fund program officer. “We’d say, ‘Well, this is the group.’ ”

In Wichita, that meant grants to Catholic Charities, which provides social services; to Sunflower Community Action, a statewide group that works on economic change for the poor; to SER Corp., which helps immigrants with work-force skills; and to the Wichita Indochinese Center, which teaches civics and language skills to immigrants.

In some Knight communities, however, PIP says there were no viable organizations able to receive money and meet the goals of the program. The communities that received no funding from the American Dream Fund were Aberdeen, S.D.; Duluth, Minn.; Gary, Ind.; and Grand Forks, N.D. In addition, some of the Knight communities were served only by statewide organizations, such as the three Georgia communities, the two South Carolina cities and Bradenton, Fla., so no local money flowed into those cities.

In some cases, Khamvongsa said, PIP would identify potential grant recipients, only to find that the group lacked proper accounting procedures or other controls that would allow it to receive the grant.

In some Knight communities, this explanation has merit. For instance, Aberdeen, which had an overall population of nearly 25,000 according to the 2000 census, had just 183 foreign-born residents.

This partly explains why, in its Grant Expenditure Evaluation, KPMG found that PIP “encountered difficulties in awarding the intended number of grants.” The collaborative nature of the selection process also slowed the process, KPMG found. In response, PIP agreed to a new disbursement schedule through the remainder of the program, which is set to end in 2009.

In all, PIP is supposed to disburse nearly \$4.9 million in grants through the end of 2009, and KPMG recommended that PIP notify Knight Foundation should it fall behind. Knight program staff also have said that they wanted to ensure the right organizations received the grants and didn’t just shovel money out the door.

Khamvongsa says the American Dream Fund’s biggest success has been in building infrastructure where previously none existed. She points to Lexington, Ky., where the American Dream Fund initially awarded grants to two service-providing groups, then to an umbrella organization. All three became part of a coalition to identify and address gaps in services. That’s part of how the fund was initially envisioned: to build networks to increase immigrants’ civic participation.

A Touchstone Center analysis of survey data shows that the funded groups consider networking and collaboration to be their top organizational strength.

“There’s a fair amount of evidence that organizations are not only facilitating ... immigrant engagement and adjustment and participation but are in fact learning and getting better and getting incrementally stronger at what they do over time,” said David Scheie, co-coordinator of the Touchstone evaluation team. “We’re getting a picture of organizations that are not working as solo efforts but are an active network.”

Of course, that does not always happen.

Says Khamvongsa: “In many communities, I think there is only so much that you could do. Funding of the groups doesn’t mean that they’re going to work together or build that close-knit community.”

That observation ties into another potential improvement: program staffing. Because the grant recipients are typically smaller and newer than large, established organizations, they often require more monitoring and assistance. In addition, with 47 grant recipients and just 1.5 staff members identifying, vetting and evaluating those grants, opportunities to help build some of the networks might have been missed.

“Honestly, when we started this fund, I think we probably underestimated the amount of time that we would actually need to spend with these groups,” Khamvongsa said. “For us, it’s not just providing funding, but it’s also being the eyes and ears of these organizations in terms of opportunities and resources. Our role is not just about funding but about linking groups and providing opportunities and resources beyond the grant money. That takes a lot of time.”

### **Pushing for change**

Even before the first American Dream Fund grants were awarded, Knight Foundation knew it might be heading into controversial territory. In a 2005 memo to the Knight board that made the case for the program, foundation staff listed one of the risks: “The fund will operate in an emotionally and politically charged atmosphere in which community attitudes toward immigrants reflect short-term situations and pressures.”

Indeed, the following two years were marked by intense political discussions, protests and activism on both sides of the immigration issue, as Congress considered comprehensive immigration reform legislation that would have granted the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States a path to citizenship. In one sense, this is civic engagement – residents becoming mobilizing in their communities around issues that affect their lives. Encouraging civic engagement is one of Knight’s fundamental priorities.

Some grant recipients clearly focused on advocacy. For instance, the Coalition of New South Carolinians requested and received a \$50,000, two-year American Dream Fund grant to “develop the coalition and strengthen its advocacy capacity. ... American Dream Funding would support

the part-time salary of a Coalition Coordinator and enable CNSC to have greater participation in national campaigns, such as the Fair Immigration Reform Movement.”

Sometimes, the grants went explicitly for policy advocacy even when the organization performed other work that met other American Dream Fund goals. For instance, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center runs legal clinics, leadership training and is engaged in building networks of immigrant groups – all of which were desired in the initial phase of American Dream Fund grant making.

But the \$50,000, two-year American Dream Fund grant it was awarded in 2005 went to “strengthen its advocacy capacity,” according to the summary from PIP. The grant “would enable FIAC to have greater participation in national campaigns, such as the Fair Immigration Reform Movement. ... The Immigration Policy and Statewide program aims to strengthen the organization’s advocacy efforts, which often are overshadowed by FIAC’s current priority of individual advocacy.” (emphasis added)

Asked to assess the effectiveness of the American Dream Fund program that she helped create, former National Venture Fund director Lisa Versaci said the strategy to achieve comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level almost worked.

“[Our grantees] actually came very close,” she said, adding that the funding partners didn’t count on such an “aggressive backlash” from those opposed to the idea. “[Our grantees] did come up with a pretty comprehensive, bipartisan bill. It got very far. We were very much involved in that. We did increase immigrant civic participation dramatically.”

Even if the bill failed, there are successes to point to, she says. The groups working on immigration reform built lasting ties to each other – a connection that helps their current and future endeavors.

Even with the failure of comprehensive immigration reform legislation in 2007, American Dream Fund grant recipients say they’re having success in the policy arena. In the 2007 Touchstone Center survey, “policy advocacy achievements” are the most commonly mentioned accomplishment, followed by “organizational capacity gains” and “community impacts.”

However, a growing sense among new Knight staff has emerged that the money spent on advocacy yielded few tangible results. This shift away from advocacy comes as debates over immigration tend to be moving from the national to local levels.

Paula Ellis, the foundation’s vice president of national and new initiatives, says that while it might be tempting to walk away from the subject entirely, the needs are too great. She says creating change is an organic, adaptive process – one in which you consistently learn and improve. That’s what’s happening with the American Dream Fund.



“A lot of groups we work with are thinking, ‘Did we put too many chips in the basket of creating comprehensive immigration reform?’ ” she says. “With change, sometimes you can’t get to the next step without having taken the first step.”

### **Local improvements**

A more detailed look at the effect of the American Dream Fund program comes from the evaluations from the Touchstone Center, a Minneapolis firm specializing in evaluating collaborative community-action projects. It is paid by PIP, with funding coming originally from Knight and other Four Freedoms Fund partners.

Their work is complex, as it tries to measure quantitatively how dozens of diverse groups are performing. Nearly all of the information on grantee performance comes from the grantees themselves in the form of questionnaires and surveys, so it is hard to develop an independent judgment of the groups’ performance.

Of 221 American Dream Fund-related immigrants who completed a survey in 2007, 13 percent said they became U.S. citizens in the last year, and 39 percent said they voted in the last year. Twenty percent reported no prior civic involvement.

The surveys also reveal that many of the funded groups lack crucial organizational know-how. For instance, groups consistently list fund raising as their biggest challenge. Other areas such as staff development and communications also show weaknesses. Knight staff members have said that in the next round of American Dream Fund grants, focus on organizational capacity will become a bigger priority.

### **A new focus**

Clearly, these immigrant groups are laboring in a vital area. According to the latest estimates from the Washington-based Pew Research Center, the number of Latinos and Asians is expected to triple over the next 40 years. By 2050, non-Hispanic whites are expected to fall to just 47 percent of the U.S. population – a decline from the current 67 percent.

Faced with those realities, Alberto Ibarguen, Knight’s president, says it’s more important than ever that involvement in immigrant communities has a tangible impact. Under his leadership, Knight plans to focus American Dream Fund efforts on encouraging and helping immigrants with green cards to become U.S. citizens.

Once citizens, the thinking goes, immigrants will have more influence in policy debates that affect them.

“This is more than an immediate kind of strategy,” he says. “This is really a long-range citizenship strategy that says if you’re going to be here and work here ... the ideal is for you not to just be

a decent contributor to the economy but to be a contributor in a civic sense. It says, you, the recent immigrant, ought to have a point of view that should inform our national policy.”

Ibargüen says other foundations are talking, too, about how to narrow their efforts to be effective in such a broad field. He says there are challenges, such as convincing immigrants to take the step to become citizens, and then to help them navigate the tricky process that’s now marked by big backlogs.

But he says politicians would take note and temper some of the hot rhetoric on the issue.

And that, ultimately, could turn the American Dream Fund into a program that makes a profound difference – “a quieter debate that will lead to a resolution of the stalemate we have now.”

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*Tony Mecia is assistant business editor of The Charlotte Observer. He wrote this for Knight Foundation.*

# In Charlotte, New Immigrants Hunger For Services as Groups Struggle To Keep Pace with Demand

By Tony Mecia

It's a Saturday morning in east Charlotte, and nine Latinos are returning from a short coffee break and begin crowding back into their seats in a small conference room. To be here, in Ruben Tantillo's citizenship class at Charlotte's Latin American Coalition, almost all have had to rearrange work schedules, or have forsaken time with their kids or extra time to sleep.

Coffee, they joke during the break, helps keep them awake amid Tantillo's meticulous instruction. On this morning, Tantillo has covered the three branches of government, the term lengths of members of Congress and the name of the U.S. Supreme Court's chief justice, John G. Roberts. By the end of the eight-week course, Tantillo tells his class, they'll probably know more on the topics than most Americans.

The class is in English, but the students are clearly more comfortable speaking Spanish.

Asked in Spanish by a visitor why they want to become citizens, they waste no time in replying:



John Daughtry, LOF Productions for Knight Foundation

**Students interact with teacher Ruben Tantillo in a classroom at the Latin American Coalition.**



John Daughtry, LOF Productions for Knight Foundation

**With recent American Dream Fund supported help by International House, Jildago “Gil” Bautista, 28, was recently admitted to the U.S. to join his wife Jessica and daughter Rosamaria, 4, in Charlotte. Paralegal Jelena Giric-Held, far left, and attorney Ann Crotty, far right, guided the family through the process.**

*“El derecho al voto,”* says Gloria Escobar from Honduras. The right to vote.

*“Para seguridad y protección,”* says Ana Esteves from the Dominican Republic. For security and protection.

*“Para tener más derechos,”* says Rebecca Chavez from Mexico. To have more rights.

Tantillo’s Saturday morning class is but one small example of the effect of Knight Foundation’s American Dream Fund in Charlotte. In the coming months, the students – all of whom are legal residents – hope to be interviewed by immigration officials and earn U.S. citizenship. The Latin American Coalition received \$25,000 a year for two years from the fund and used it to establish for the first time a citizenship class for permanent residents, among other uses.

In Charlotte, as in many other cities dealing for the first time with an influx of immigrants, there aren’t enough services available to meet the many needs of foreign-born newcomers. Grant recipients say Knight funding from the American Dream Fund has been important and allows progress in incorporating immigrants into the fabric of American life.

The Latin American Coalition is one of three nonprofit organizations receiving American



Dream Fund grants in Charlotte – a fast-growing city that has historically been unaccustomed to receiving large numbers of immigrants. Staff of the Knight Foundation and of Public Interest Projects, which administers the American Dream Fund, say the three groups complement each other well: The Latin American Coalition, largely a Latino advocacy organization that also provides a wide array of services to Latinos; International House of Metrolina, which runs English tutoring, citizenship classes and a legal clinic for immigrants and also hosts cultural events for many nationalities; and HELP (Helping Empower Local People), a church-backed group that holds community workshops primarily for African-Americans and whites, including a growing number of Latinos.

While the number of people served directly by American Dream Fund-supported programs in Charlotte is by no means staggering, the effects are tangible: The Latin American Coalition started the citizenship class, International House hired a full-time lawyer to work exclusively on naturalization cases, and HELP held forums that taught leadership skills.

It's evident that services available to Charlotte-area immigrants have not kept pace with the growing need. Since 1990, the Latino population in Mecklenburg County has exploded by nearly tenfold, according to a 2006 Knight-funded study by the Urban Institute at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. In an area of the country where diversity for a long time was thought of in black-and-white terms, Latinos now make up 9 percent of Mecklenburg County's population.

Two of the three ADF grant recipients have a fair amount of visibility in the Charlotte immigrant community. A survey of 400 Charlotte-area Latinos found that 16 percent had used the services of the Latin American Coalition – the highest figure of any non-governmental organization – and 7 percent had used the services of International House, according to the UNC Charlotte study. Survey participants were not asked about HELP, a much smaller organization.

The Latin American Coalition and International House work together on some programs – such as compiling a joint list of immigration lawyers. Some of that might spring from the involvement of Knight Foundation, but some of it might be that they're simply doing related work in a field with few players.

Susan Patterson, Knight's program officer in Charlotte, has some familiarity with the grant recipients but little direct involvement in the ADF program. She says one of the main benefits

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*“This is the Southeast.*

*One thing the Knight Foundation did is they had the courage to provide grants for organizations providing services to immigrants. Here, that is not always a popular thing.*

*It took the most amazing courage to take leadership on this issue.*

*That's different, and that's special.”*

*—Raluca Iosif, International House*

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## American Dream Fund Charlotte Grant Recipients



### **Latin American Coalition**

Advocacy/service providing organization for Latinos.

*Organization budget:* \$425,000

*Grant Amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Results from grant:* Support of Latino Civic Engagement Project, which allowed grantee to add citizenship classes, conduct voter registration, hold English classes and organize advocacy trips to Washington.

### **International House of Metrolina**

Cultural/service-providing organization

*Organization budget:* \$718,000

*Grant amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Results from grant:* Hiring of full-time attorney for citizenship issues, expanding frequency of citizenship classes.

### **HELP (Helping Empower Local People)**

Church-supported community-building organization

*Organization budget:* \$197,800

*Grant amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

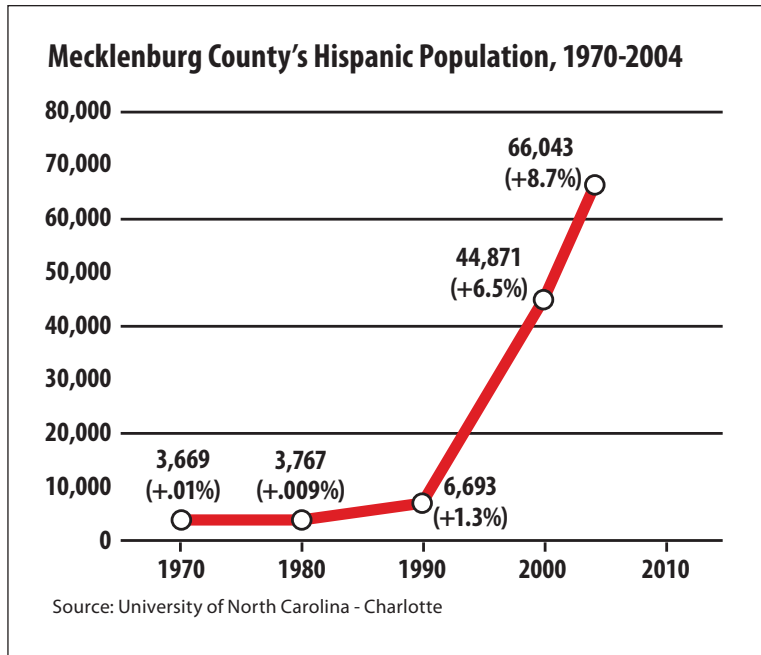
*Results from grant:* Held immigrant seminars, assessed local needs for naturalization services and English-language instruction

she's seen is the connection built between Charlotte grant recipients and counterparts across the country from national conferences. She recalls seeing the director of the Latin American Coalition come back energized from a conference, with a sense that she wasn't fighting a battle alone.

However, Patterson says, that doesn't always translate into local collaboration.

"What has not happened – though it was not the goal of the grant – is I don't think we've seen a lot of what I'd call service collaboration," she says. "At the moment, in Charlotte in particular, there's so much need and not enough service providers, and they're scrambling to meet the needs of people who walk through their doors."

Angeles Ortega-Moore, the Latin American Council's executive director, says there are so many needs in the community that are going largely unaddressed, such as domestic violence, mental health and children's issues. Although the ADF grant accounts for less than 6 percent of her orga-



nization’s budget, civic engagement is still an important part of the council’s activities, she says.

“It definitely is something that when you look at the benefits, when people call you when they swore to the flag and they’re crying because they became a U.S. citizen, you can’t put a price on that,” she says.

Over at International House, Knight funding helped hire a lawyer who opened 210 naturalization cases last year and referred another 290 to others.

Raluca Iosif, International House’s communications director, credits the foundation for its support in an area that can sometimes be controversial.

“This is the Southeast,” she says. “One thing the Knight Foundation did is they had the courage to provide grants for organizations providing services to immigrants. Here, that is not always a popular thing. It took the most amazing courage to take leadership on this issue. That’s different, and that’s special.”



Carl Juste, Iris Photo Collective, for Knight Foundation

**Sant La Executive Director Gepsie Metellus, left, listens closely as a client shares his thoughts about preparing his taxes. Rose Mainville, right, an office clerk, assists.**

## **Miami: With Plenty of Choices, A Focus on Haitians and Network-Building**

As executive director of Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood, Gepsie Metellus quickly cites many of her organization's accomplishments in improving the lives of local Haitians.

It has started a Creole-language cable television talk show, "Teleskopi," that reaches more than 350,000 households. It has put on financial-education programs and held community forums – no small feat for an immigrant population whose home country has been often marred by violent political unrest.

But ask Metellus about the difference Sant La is making in people's lives, and she'll tell you about Gerard Pierre.

Pierre, she says, attended one of Sant La's community forums on immigration a couple years back. He heard a panelist – a paralegal with Catholic Charities – talk about legal immigration. Af-



## American Dream Fund Miami Grant Recipients

### Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center

*Description:* Advocacy/service providing community organization for Haitians.

*Organization budget:* \$830,645 (2005)

*Grant Amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Purpose of grant:* Expand civic-engagement initiative to include community forums, small-group sessions and Creole-language media outreach related to education.

### Haitian Women of Miami (FANM)

*Description:* Service-providing organization for poor to middle-income Haitian women

*Organization budget:* \$700,000 (2005)

*Grant Amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Purpose of grant:* Support citizenship program, including civic education and language classes,



**Martine Charles, left, 4, reads a book as her mother Antoinise Jean-Baptiste, 40, center, talks with instructor Antoinette Pentta about various methods of reducing domestic stress during Parenting Class at FANM.**

immigration-related legal services and Creole-language media outreach.

### Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center

*Description:* Policy advocacy, legal services organization

*Organization budget:* \$2.4 million (2005)

*Grant Amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Purpose of grant:* Strengthen advocacy capacity to allow the group to participate in national immigration-reform networks.

### Democracia U.S.A. (formerly Mi Familia Vota)

*Description:* Leadership training/voter registration

*Organization budget:* \$12.4 million (2007)

*Grant Amount:* \$50,000 (over two years)

*Purpose of grant:* Establish leadership training academies for Caribbean immigrants (Haitian, Jamaican, Bahamian), designed to teach participants about civics, the legislative process, voter registration, organizing and communication strategies.

terward, he followed up with the paralegal, one thing led to another, and Pierre was able to bring his wife and children to Miami from Haiti. Metellus is certain they'll become U.S. citizens when they're eligible.

While there are plenty of anecdotes, there are also numbers that show Sant La's impact. Its community forums, held about quarterly, regularly draw more than 200 participants, with one on immigration reform drawing an estimated 650. Its civic-education classes, too, are well subscribed, with more than 400 graduates in the last two years – numbers that wouldn't have been possible, Metellus says, without money from the American Dream Fund.

"You're here because of these people," she says. "It makes you believe that what you're doing has a purpose."

Sant La is one of four American Dream Fund grant recipients working in South Florida. In Miami, long accustomed to receiving immigrants from many countries in the Caribbean and Central and South America, the funding strategy was different than in smaller communities. In Miami, there were plenty of groups from which to choose.

Knight Foundation's local immigration grant investments, administered by Public Interest Projects, went to two smaller groups working with Haitians. But to focus on network-building, the American Dream Fund also bankrolled larger groups working to strengthen coalitions: the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, which reported a \$2.4 million budget in 2005, and Mi Familia Vota (now called Democracia U.S.A.), which had a \$12.4 million budget in 2007.

"We decided, let's maybe focus on a community that is often underserved," said Channapha Khamvongsa, PIP's American Dream Fund program officer. "There's a huge Cuban and Latino community, and often times, the Haitian community gets left out of the picture in terms of funding support."

At the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, the numbers of people reached are hard to come by, as the grant was awarded mainly for policy advocacy and outreach work as opposed to services, says Charu Newhouse al-Sahli, FIAC's statewide director. The ADF grant is a small part of the coalition's budget, much of which goes toward providing legal services for immigrants in the areas of domestic violence, asylum, children's issues and other topics, including naturalization.

There are plenty of cultural differences between Haitians and Miami-Dade's Latino majority, says Metellus (a former member of the foundation's Miami Community Advisory Committee). Haitians tend to need little prodding to seek U.S. citizenship but are often wary of participating in politics and community gatherings. So Sant La devised the Creole-language talk show on Comcast to help educate the community on civics and other issues.

At the same time, Metellus has started reaching out to Hispanic groups in Miami to try to overcome some long-term resentment toward Cuban immigrants, among others, whom some Haitians believe receive favored treatment under U.S. law. She tries to attend meetings and rallies to show support.

"We understand, correctly, that we need to work together, so we can diminish the negative feelings that exist between our two groups," she said. "We need to work to make sure both groups understand they're on the same boat."