

GARIFUNA COALITION USA, INC.



The Garifuna Roundtable

The Garifuna Roundtable was created on January 31, 2009 as a result of the advent of the Obama administration. No group has a larger stake in the path our community chooses as we begin a new era of hope than Garifunas. As citizens with a substantial role and stake in the future of this city, state and nation, we, Garifuna Americans look forward with hope and promise to a community that truly reflects the "American dream."

Conversely, we can become a united and even greater community, a community that values all of its citizens, where communities and families are strong and prosper, where we encourage and build on our rich culture. We can be an even more prosperous community, where we bring together the enormous productive potential of all of our people, where all have an equal opportunity to contribute to our economy and to our future—to have a decent job, a good education, to be healthy—and to thrive through our enterprise and hard work. We can become a community where every child can have a full and productive life. It is our choice.

The Garifuna Roundtable will be a coalition of New York City's Garifuna community Leaders that represent the diverse Garifuna organizations in the City. Roundtable members understand how changes in the world and national economies will affect the Garifuna community in New York City, and how the public and private sectors can work together to provide support as we look to improve our community.

The Garifuna Roundtable is **not** the creation of another organization but an effort to organize our community using the model used by the now President of the United States of America, Barack Obama as the former director of Developing Communities Project, an institutionally based community organization on Chicago's far south side.

According to Mr. Obama, Organizing begins with the premise that:

(1) The problems facing inner-city communities do not result from a lack of effective solutions, but from a lack of power to implement these solutions;

(2) That the only way for communities to build long-term power is by organizing people and money around a common vision; and

(3) That a viable organization can only be achieved if a broadly based indigenous leadership — and not one or two charismatic leaders — can knit together the diverse interests of their local institutions.

This means bringing together churches, block clubs, parent groups and any other institutions in a given community to pay dues, hire organizers, conduct research, develop leadership, hold rallies and education campaigns, and begin drawing up plans on a whole range of issues — jobs, education, crime, etc. Once such a vehicle is formed, it holds the power to make politicians, agencies and corporations more responsive to community needs.

The Roundtable's central purpose will be to pursue the development of a common agenda that will improve the social, economic, civic and cultural conditions of the Garifuna Immigrant Community in New York City and provide a high quality of life for the city's citizens. The Roundtable will achieve this purpose by defining strategic goals and objectives, and

communicating these objectives to the Garifuna Community, government officials and the public at large. The goal will be to harness the internal productive capacities, both in terms of money and people that already exist in our community.

New York City' Garifuna Community Organizing

Geographically, New York is a city with 5 boroughs, 59 community districts and hundreds of neighborhoods.

- The neighborhood is the foundation from where it all begins in New York City
- Therefore, we need representation in as many Community Districts as possible.
- However, we also need a coordinated effort at the City level and that will be achieved through the monthly Garifuna Roundtable meetings.

A long-term focus on root causes is the proper orientation.

- We need to be part of the solution.
- Recognizing that our issues are New York's issues, we shall stand ready to work as full partners with all segments of New York City's society to address our current ordeals and fulfill the promise of the future.

The following issues have been identified:

- Community Development
- Civic Participation
- Family Children & Youth
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Immigration
- Economic Development
- Work force Development
- Poverty Reduction
- Arts & Culture
- Sports
- Parks
- Identity
- Gender
- Technology
- Faith Based Organizations
- Census 2010

Strategic Planning

Planning is key to realizing community goals that matter most to the stakeholders, therefore, It was agreed that the Roundtable would prepare a strategic plan using the following seven step process:

Step 1: Establish a Planning Committee that represents the diverse interests in our community.

Step 2: Define a Mission Statement to create a sense of mission for your community organization.

Step 3: Summarize the Results of our Needs Assessment

Step 4: Evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Step 5: Establish Goals to establish the direction we want to take for our community development initiatives.

Step 6: Identify Objectives and Strategies

Step 7: Prepare a Written Report

It was agreed that the Planning Committee will be organized in an issue-oriented task force structure, in order to take advantage of the broad-based coalition of organizations and that each organization involved will be responsible for directing research, supervising preparation of position papers, recommending policy and advocating for change to factors affecting New York City 's Garifunas well being. The organizations will work in concert promoting a proactive agenda on issues where there is a consensus on how to achieve change.

Each member of the strategic planning committee needs to have a good understanding of the planning process. Therefore, the first step was to have committee members become familiar with this process by reviewing the 7 steps independently. It was also agreed that Mr. Jose Francisco Avila would serve as the facilitator to help the committee stay focused and the community assessment would be based on the Need Analysis prepared by the Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc.

Therefore, Mr. Avila prepared a draft of the strategic plan which was circulated through the Garifuna Roundtable online group for review by all the participants. The latest version was circulated in preparation for the May 16, 2009 meeting, where members of the Roundtable brainstormed about the strategic plan and made suggestions and modifications. Based on the brainstorm deliberations, it was decided to establish the following short term goals to establish the direction we want to take for our community development initiatives.

1. The community development initiative will be based on creating awareness and appreciation of the Garifuna culture and its contribution to the culture and society of New York City. The strategy will be to plan, organize and execute a series of activities during Summer 2009, to promote the Garifuna Community in New York City.
2. Increase the civic engagement of our community by developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make a difference.
3. Work to secure a complete and accurate 2010 Census count of the Garifuna population

Each one of the participants agreed to support the plan and to recruit other community members to support the activities to assure a large representative contingent of Garifuna citizens. A marketing campaign will be developed that will include rebranding the Garifuna Coalition's logo to highlight the Garifuna brand to leverage the existing resources (Advocacy Center, website, etc.). The marketing materials will include a brochure listing all the Garifuna Roundtable participants.