

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES  
2020 CENSUS FIELD HEARING (NYC)**

**TESTIMONY OF MARC H. MORIAL  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman, and Committee Members, I am Marc Morial, CEO and President of the National Urban League. I am pleased to join you today to provide remarks on the status of the 2020 Census.

The National Urban League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civil rights organization founded in 1910 to secure equal opportunities and economic empowerment for African Americans and communities of color on issues concerning housing, income, employment, education and civil rights. We conduct our work through 90 local affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia, impacting the lives of some 2 million persons each year.

The National Urban League has played an active role in the last five decennial censuses, starting when former Urban League Executive Director, Whitney L. Young, Jr. testified before the *House Subcommittee on Census and Statistics* in September 1970, regarding the accuracy of the 1970 Census. In carrying out this legacy, the Urban League has served on past Census advisory committees, and I've had the honor of chairing the Census Bureau's 2010 Census Advisory Committee at the invitation of President, Barack Obama's then Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke.

Currently, the National Urban League is a member of the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations. The NAC provides advisory members an up close view of decennial preparations as well as the *occasional* opportunity to affect change. These are infrequent instances occurring only when the Census Bureau is compelled to embrace transparency and seek our input, (*which is why Congressional oversight is so critical at this time*).

**THE CENSUS IS IMPORTANT: THERE IS NO REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY WITHOUT IT**

- **CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE** (Article 1, Section 2) directs a census to be conducted every ten years to determine representation in the U.S. Congress—counting ALL PERSONS residing in the United States

- **FEDERAL FUNDING**, currently more than \$675 billion are allocated to state and local governments each year for a variety of programs: housing, education, healthcare, transportation infrastructure, etc.
- **POLITICAL POWER**- Determines seats for Congressional apportionment, the Electoral College; basis for drawing redistricting lines: fair and equitably;
- **SHAPING LOCAL AND TRIBAL DISTRICTS**: School districts, wards, parishes, boroughs, townships, villages, American Indian tribal boundaries, etc.

**THE 2020 CENSUS: CONDUCTED IN AN ENVIRONMENT MORE CHALLENGING THAN EVER:**

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| • RACIAL AND POLITICALLY<br>POLARIZED SOCIETY                        | • DECLINING RESPONSE RATES                     |
| • DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT   | • INCREASINGLY DIVERSE<br>POPULATION           |
| • 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION   | • INFORMAL, COMPLEX LIVING<br>ARRANGEMENTS     |
| • CITIZENSHIP QUESTION   | • A MOBILE POPULATION                          |
| • FEAR OF RETRIBUTION<br>(DEPORTATION, EVICTION FROM<br>HOMES, etc.) | • SOCIAL MEDIA THREATS AND<br>COMPUTER HACKING |

**AN INACCURATE CENSUS: WILL DEPRIVE COMMUNITIES OF:**

- **ACCURATE DATA** for most federally produced statistics across federal agencies (i.e., Consumer Price Expenditure survey, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control)
- **CRITICAL SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH** conducted by researchers, think tanks, the private sector and academia (i.e., PEW, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, American Statistical Association, Population Association of America, Robert Woodson Foundation)
- **BILLIONS OF DOLLARS** in federal funding
- **FAIR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION** in the U.S. Congress, the Electoral College and State legislatures

- **ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS** and constitutional protections ensuring equality and civil rights protections (i.e., FAIR HOUSING, VOTING RIGHTS)

### **COUNTING EVERYONE IS A CHALLENGE**

Over the past 60 years, Census accuracy has steadily improved, but some groups still experience higher undercounts and omissions from the census than others:

- Racial and ethnic populations
- African American men
- Black and Brown young children (0-4yrs old)
- Persons with limited English proficiency
- Single-parent households
- Immigrants
- Renters
- Young mobile adults
- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Poor and impoverished
- Persons displaced by natural disasters
- Formerly incarcerated

### **2010 CENSUS: AFRICAN AMERICAN NET UNDERCOUNT AND OMISSIONS**

**NOTE:** *Omission rates* reflect actual persons missed in the census. Contrastingly, the *net undercount* reflects the number of omissions (missed persons), subtracted from the number of *overcounted* persons; giving a “net” undercount.” Omission rates provide a more accurate assessment of the actual number of persons missed in the Census/not counted, vs. the net undercount which factors *overcounts* into the final equation.

- In the 2010 census, the Black population had the highest net undercount and omission rate of any major race/Hispanic group.
- Based on the Census Bureau’s post 2010 census Demographic Analysis, there was a net undercount of 2.5% for the black alone population compared to a net *overcount* of 0.5% for non-blacks.

- Black males in their 20s, 30s, and 40s had exceptionally high net undercount rates and high omissions rates. “Excerpt From: William P. O’Hare. “Differential Undercounts in the U.S. Census.” Apple Books, March 2019
- The net undercount rate for Black males age 18–49 was very high--7.6%, based on post 2010 census Demographic Analysis—meaning almost 8% of all African American males in this age group were undercounted.
- The net omissions rate for Black male renters ages 30–49 was extremely high at 19.7%-- meaning nearly 20% of all Black men who rented housing in 2010, were completely omitted from the census. Excerpt from: William O’Hare. “Differential Undercounts in the U.S. census.” Apple books, march 2019;
- According to the U.S. census, in 2010, young Black children (0-4yrs) were undercounted at twice the rate as young nonblack children, (6.3 % of young Black children vs. 3% for nonblack, non-Hispanic children).
- The omissions rate for the Black alone or in combination population in the 2010 census was 9.3% compared to 3.8% for the non-Hispanic white alone population. This means, 9.3 percent of the Black population was completely missed in the census (vs. The overall net undercount of the black population at 2.5 %).
- Black men experience disproportionately higher rates of incarceration, and are usually imprisoned (and counted), away from their homes-- typically in far away rural jurisdictions. Inflating the voting power of residents in prison-hosting districts violates the Constitutional principle of *one person, one vote*.
- Non-Hispanic white communities are more likely to be *overcounted*, meaning wealthier, white communities receive *more* than their fair share of resources and representation. (Source: Urban Wire; blog of the Urban Institute, 2019)
- Excerpt From: Dr. William P. O’Hare. “Differential Undercounts in the U.S. Census.”  
“I am not aware of any commonly accepted explanation for the dramatic improvement in the Census coverage of the Black population between 1990 and 2010. It is possible the

improvement is related to expanded outreach activities such as the Census Partnership Program and Paid Advertising started in the 2000 Census. It is also possible the large-scale incarceration of Black men resulted in a lower net undercount.”

#### **AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION: 2018 END-TO-END TEST- PROVIDENCE, RI**

Each decade usually in years ending in “8” the Census Bureau conducts a final “systems check,” of all decennial operations and designs prior to Census Day. This “dry run,” helps the Census Bureau understand its challenges and make final adjustments to correct system flaws and inefficiencies before Census day. Due to budget cuts, the 2018 Census test was downsized from three locations (Blue Field, WVA, Pierce County, Washington, and Providence, RI, to only one in Providence, RI. African American/Black participation in the 2018 Census End-to-End test was not optimal, indicating the amount of additional outreach and education needed in the Black community before and throughout the 2020 Census. African American/Black participation (self response rates) are provided below:

- Only 39 percent of African Americans self responded (by internet, phone, paper) to the 2018 census test. The overall 2018 self-response rate for all populations was 52%-- surpassing the Census Bureau’s diminished expectation of 49%. The Census Bureau expects 60.5% of the U.S. population will self-respond in the 2020 census, with 39.5% requiring an enumerator’s visit. Based on 2018 Census test results, the African American population has an uphill climb to reach 60.5% in 2020.
- Of the 39 percent of African Americans who self responded, 54 percent of this number responded by Internet, 37 percent by paper and 7 percent by phone. The Census Bureau should anticipate the need for a high volume of paper questionnaires given Black and other communities of color preference to self respond via paper forms.
- An alarming 46 percent of the Black population did not self respond to the Providence, RI 2018 Census test, and required a visit by a census enumerator; second lowest only to Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders residing in Providence, whose total population is < 200.

## CHALLENGES TO AN ACCURATE 2020 CENSUS COUNT

- **CENSUS LEADERSHIP GAP**—President Trump did not appoint a census director for almost two years (1.8 months) during 2020 Census research and design, including the end-to-end test.
- **A DECADE OF BUDGET CUTS**—A republican congress sharply cut census funding necessary for effective 2020 census planning, scaling down the 2018 end-to-end test, delaying the 2020 Census Communications Campaign, and risking IT security (per GAO reports). Democratic Congress is now playing budget *catch-up*—normalizing census appropriations one-year out.
- **FIRST INTERNET CENSUS**—Cyber security, public distrust, digital divide (per GAO)
- **FEWER LOCAL AND REGIONAL FIELD OFFICES**--2010 Census: 494 Local Census Offices (LCOS) NATIONWIDE vs. 2020 CENSUS: 248 Area Census Offices (ACOS). ACO/LCOs conduct one of the most fundamental tasks associated with the Census, Nonresponse Follow-Up. Fifteen members of Congress wrote a letter to census (1/19) expressing their concerns about the reduced number of census local and regional offices (from 12 to 6 regional offices).
- **HIRING BACKLOGS** --We are hearing reports of extensive hiring delays and backlogs spanning several months back (fall 2018), impacting the timely hiring of partnership staff.
- **CITIZENSHIP QUESTION**--Politicization of 2020 census (trump, ross, sessions)
- **CYBERSECURITY/WEAPONIZING SOCIAL MEDIA** (vulnerable to Russian meddling)
- **PUBLIC DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT**/ Trump administration's anti immigrant rhetoric and policies
- **COUNTING BLACK AND BROWN CHILDREN**

## 2020 CENSUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS/ REASONS TO PARTICIPATE

- Strong data privacy and confidential protections (Title 13 U.S. C.). Census data are safe!
- Multiple ways to participate: online, via telephone, paper questionnaire and nonresponse follow-up. Communities of color prefer paper questionnaire.

- Leveraging the Internet to make it easy to participate anytime, anywhere on any platform— tablet, mobile phone, desktop, paper.
- Field partnership specialists are working cooperatively with Complete Count Committees across the country (more than 1,900 CCCs established).
- National organizations, stakeholder coalitions and advocacy groups have a head start working together to educate our communities on the benefits of census participation
- Philanthropic organizations are supporting grass roots efforts.
- Public libraries are engaged to help bridge the digital divide, but can't do it alone.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for this opportunity to share the National Urban League's perspective on the 2020 census and the implications of an African American undercount. A significant undercount of the Black population and communities of color is an undercount for the entire country. Communities of all ethnicities, races and geographic locations stand to lose federal funding, political representation and accurate data if the Census bureau fails in its mission to count every person residing in the United States.

We are urging our communities to get involved and to encourage their neighbors, family members, church members, and co workers to participate in the Census; to count *everyone in the household*, including babies, foster children and extended family members. It is important, safe and easy.

In addition, we urge Congress to continue to hold oversight hearings to shed light on issues the public needs to know about regarding census readiness; especially cyber security, the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign, and field infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention. I appreciate this opportunity to present to you today.