



65 Broadway, Suite 1800
New York NY 10006
Tel: (212) 248-2785
Fax: (212) 248-6409

www.centerforsocialinclusion.org

**TESTIMONY OF JACOB FABER, RESEARCHER FOR
THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION**

before

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE

April 10th, 2008

Good afternoon. I want to thank the members of the Immigration Committee for holding this important hearing on the positive impact immigrants have on New York City. My name is Jacob Faber and I am a Researcher at the Center for Social Inclusion (CSI). CSI is a national policy advocacy organization, serving as a bridge between policy research and grassroots activism in order to create more effective strategies for promoting equality and opportunity. We conduct applied research, training and public education, and support the development of multi-racial alliances and networks with the goal of dismantling structural racism.

Both locally and nationally, the debate on immigration too often emphasizes tensions between immigrant and non-immigrant groups. While tensions exist, they are often overstated and our focus on them obscures the real issue, which is that structural arrangements limit opportunities for communities of color and immigrant communities. Tensions are symptoms of these inequities and indicate that our structural arrangements are not working.

By structural arrangements, I am referring to the ways our public and private institutions interact to produce barriers to opportunities, such as well-paying jobs, good schools, safe and affordable housing, etc.

The impact of these arrangements is clearly visible in New York. While being one of the most diverse cities in human history, most of our neighborhoods are still very segregated. The results are communities of color and immigrant communities isolated from good jobs and living disproportionately in concentrated poverty.

These patterns of isolation and exclusion continued even during the city's recent economic boom. We are losing affordable housing at a faster rate than we are building and preserving it. One third of the city's schools do not pass federal standards. Our economic base continues to move from one of middle-class manufacturing jobs, to low paying service and retail jobs. These, and other structural problems, disproportionately affect communities of color and immigrant communities, who have actually seen an increase in poverty since 2001. This scarcity permits the persistent wage exploitation of immigrant workers and the exclusion of other poor communities.

The socioeconomic trends affecting the city, as well as the resulting tensions, are part of larger regional dynamics and require solutions at multiple levels – from the neighborhood to the city to the region.

There are important steps we can take to alleviate tensions. For example, by supporting policies that tie growth in the suburbs to growth in the cities, we can build opportunities that benefit all communities. Proof of this is a nationwide study of 74 metropolitan areas, which found that investments in a city's low-income communities help increase regional income growth.

By recognizing the shared fate of all communities, we are able to see our mutual need for structural changes and the policy solutions that can help us make those changes. At the same time, our policy solutions should recognize that while all communities suffer from bad structural arrangements, different communities are impacted differently.

We applaud the immigration committee for taking the steps it has to support the discussion of these issues and offer the following additional steps:

- 1) **Support policies** that are informed by and connected to long-term strategies that account for the shared needs of poor people of color and immigrants, as well as the unique needs of different populations.
- 2) **Support multi-racial alliances** by partnering with them and strategically allocating public resources to promote effective alliances and partnering.

On behalf of the Center for Social Inclusion, I thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony.