

Comments for the Fall, 2018 NAC Meeting
Susan Graham for Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally)

The Casey Foundation's *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* warns that the 2020 census is mired in challenges that could shortchange the official census count by at least 1 million kids younger than age 5. This discrepancy would also put hundreds of millions of federal dollars at risk and, in doing so, underfund programs that are critical for family stability and opportunity; essential programs like housing, food, education, and healthcare.

As we all know, the Casey Foundation gets its numbers from the Census Bureau. Federal dollars seem to be the focus, but can we put the money aside for the moment? Yes, it's important to be counted for the money, redistricting and civil rights enforcement, but it's also critical to focus on identity. It's crucial to see your race(s) or the races of your children on news stories, pie charts, forms, data reports, and anywhere other races are included. Also, you can't keep accurate records if you don't have an accurate representation of someone, including their racial identity.

Let me give you some reminders about identity. First, when a multiracial person is asked about their identity it sounds like this: What are you? In his book *The Lies that Bind*, Kwame Appiah makes these observations, "In sum, identities come, first with labels and ideas about why and to whom they should be applied. Second, your identity shapes your thoughts about how you should behave; and third, it affects the way other people treat you. Finally, all these dimensions of identity are contestable, always up for dispute: who's in, what they're like, how they should behave and be treated."

One example from the 2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book is this:

In 2017, 81 percent of African-American, 79 percent of American Indian, 78 percent of Latino and 60 percent of multiracial fourth-graders were not proficient in reading, compared with 54 percent of white and 44 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander students.

They used the appropriate, preferable, and respectful term "multiracial." The Census Bureau calls us "Two or More Races" people. The Casey Foundation counted and published the multiracial numbers. Not all entities do. Why is this important? Just as it's important to see the African-American, American Indian, Asian, white, and Latino students, it's crucial that multiracial families and individuals see themselves included in data. Proper racial nomenclature is critical, this has been proven over and over again every time a group, *any group*, changes its label.

The multiracial community has been invisible to this committee, the Census Bureau, and the government for far too long. We know it and you know it. We can only assume that you are not eager to have people check two or more races because it would benefit *your* groups to have *our* numbers. We are not willing to choose single race over multiracial just so your groups can benefit monetarily.

Now we are looking at the 2020 Census and how we can all shore up our numbers. We must all answer this question: how does filling out the race boxes on the census impact our groups? For the multiracial population, it's really not a matter of money. No one is going to give dollars to feed little multiracial children based on the boxes they check. However, we need to accurately report growth in our numbers and demonstrate that the multiracial population is an important one. **WE ARE ASKING TO BE INCLUDED WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT, TALK ABOUT, AND WRITE ABOUT RACES IN AMERICA.**

The multiracial population is, perhaps, the largest of the hard-to-count groups by virtue of the fact that few care if we are counted as multiracial except us. In a recent webinar, census consultant Terri Ann Lowenthal was asked if people have to respond to every question, including race, when filling out their census form online. She answered that they do not. They can "hit submit and it will be accepted." We would hate to see interracial families and multiracial individuals skip the race question. We need your help to ensure that this does not happen.

This is a time of suspicion, particularly between minorities and government. We can only get past that for the 2020 Census by showing trust. Project RACE has proven that we are a trusted entity for the multiracial population, but this committee, the bureau, and government need to show *us* that we can trust *you*. We are open to working with you to ensure that there is not an undercount of the multiracial community. We sincerely hope that you are finally ready to say the same. Thank you.

Susan Graham
President
Project RACE
Website: projectrace.com
Tel: (209) 826-2072
Email: susangraham@projectrace.com