



Mayor Michael A. Nutter at Philadelphia International Airport as he records a promotional video.

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We have seen him with a shovel in hand during Congreso's third building groundbreaking ceremony, also cleaning the neighborhood supporting the PhillyRising program, or at the most important Latino galas acknowledging the Hispanic community contributions to the city of Philadelphia. During an exclusive interview held at City Hall, Philadelphia's highest ranked official answered every question related to our community manifesting a genuine concern for the benefit of the Latino population. In this interview, Mayor Michael Nutter talks openly about issues such as Education, Crime, Immigration, Discrimination, Poverty, Obesity, and even a possible recognition to the career of boxing legend Joe Frazier.

**You have made reducing the city's high-school dropout rate a priority. This issue affects directly the Latino community of Philadelphia. What is done to achieve this goal?**

"Fortunately, we know that the two largest groups of High School dropouts are Latino males and African American males, particularly population that is challenged. Presently the overall High School graduation rate in the city is 60% and we have the goal of reaching 80% by the year 2015. We want more people to not only graduate from High School but to go to College and complete their studies. About 23% of the adults over 25 have a Bachelor Degree and we are trying to get that number to 36%, if not higher by 2017. We have made some gains but we have more work to do.

All of our young people need to stay focused on their studies and we know that we have to pay particular attention to Latinos and African Americans because of their dropout rates. I think that there are a number of things that we can do, work with our parents to make sure that they are supporting their children, also make sure that the school environment is safe, warm, nurturing and caring. I support schools run directly by the School District as well as chartered schools, like Nueva Esperanza Academy and Antonia Pantoja, that are doing great work and providing additional educational services to the young people. We know that we have challenges in terms of the Internet access and the digital divide is very high in the Latino and African American communities. 41% of Philadelphians don't have access to the Internet. We have been strongly supportive of the "Freedom Rings Partnership" which is putting 77 computer centers all across the City of Philadelphia in high property - low access neighborhoods, as well as promoting and encouraging people to take the Comcast Internet Essentials Program that is geared toward families that have a school age child in a household that qualifies for the National School Lunch Program, and with that they can access to the Internet for \$9.99 a month, and also a coupon for a laptop computer as well as a free modem. I think that technology is a component for not only close the digital divide, but also enhanced educational opportunities for young people here in Philadelphia.

We need to make sure that once they get to school, stay in school, graduate and go on to college. May 1st. becomes an important day, because that's the date when your financial aid form has to be sent in. We have a series of events where we can help young people to fill out their forms so they can get free financial aid dollars. This information can be obtained at the Mayor's Office on Education as well as Philly Goes to College. Those are some of the things that we are doing but ultimately we have to come to breach with financial challenges that the School District is facing, cuts that they have to make, also community members have to step up, parents need to be engaged, teachers have to be enthusiastic about the work that they do and we have to make sure that our children go to school in a safe environment".

**You have made a significant effort to appoint Latinos in executive positions in the City of Philadelphia. We appreciate this effort, but unfortunately, considering the population of Hispanics living in this city, the number of Latinos working for the government is still considerably small. Could you please reflect on this?**

"In the City government, the number presently is about 5%, which is a little higher than when I came in, but still not where I want it to be. Recent census show significant gains in the Latino population to about 12%. We need to do better outreach, our Human Resources office is looking at creating a position that will be Diversity Director, to develop programs and services that specifically target a variety of populations, clearly because of the increase of the Latino population and multilingual households. We are looking at how to get more bilingual people in the City government so we can communicate easier and better. We have a class of 100 officers coming out of the Police Department. We have to make sure that we can do as much outreach as possible with our partners in the Latino communities and make sure that men and women from their community apply for these jobs. I am going to stay focused on it and my expectation is that in the next four years we will make some additional gains".

**There is a concern that members of immigrant groups are victims of violence because they are more likely to open businesses in high crime areas. Latinos feel targeted. In a recent interview, Seth Williams, the Philadelphia D.A. told El Sol Latino that Hispanics have every reason to feel concerned and scared regarding the situation with crime in their communities.**

"I agree with the first part, certainly everyone should be concerned. We had some horrific crimes committed in the city just a month ago. The reality is that many in the Hispanic community are entrepreneurs that open stores, provide employment and service in the economic engine. Violent crimes are often person

## Mayor Michael Nutter Addresses Latino Community Issues

“The Latino and Hispanic population is tremendously important to the City of Philadelphia”



specific, someone who is looking for somebody, and they go after that person. Unfortunately, some bystanders get hurt, injured or killed. We want all Philadelphians to feel safer. Can be, should be, must be a much safer city, but that also involves the community getting engaged and involved, giving us the information that we need to arrest people, encourage business people to have cameras and video surveillance systems in their stores to help us with information and quite honestly deter some who will engage in that kind of activity. I expect that people would be concerned but I don't necessarily know that they feel scared. What I would say is beware about what's going on and if you see something, say something, so we can prevent some of this incidents from happening".

**What is the position of the City of Philadelphia regarding illegal immigrants?**

"I actually don't use that term at all and I don't allow people the government to use it. They are just people who are undocumented that have issues or problems with their paperwork. I signed an executive order with the help of Izzy Colón, and our policy in the City of Philadelphia is that we serve everyone here regardless of their status. Figuring out someone's status is the direct responsibility of the Federal Government and my responsibility is to provide services. It is against our policies to deny services because of the immigration status".

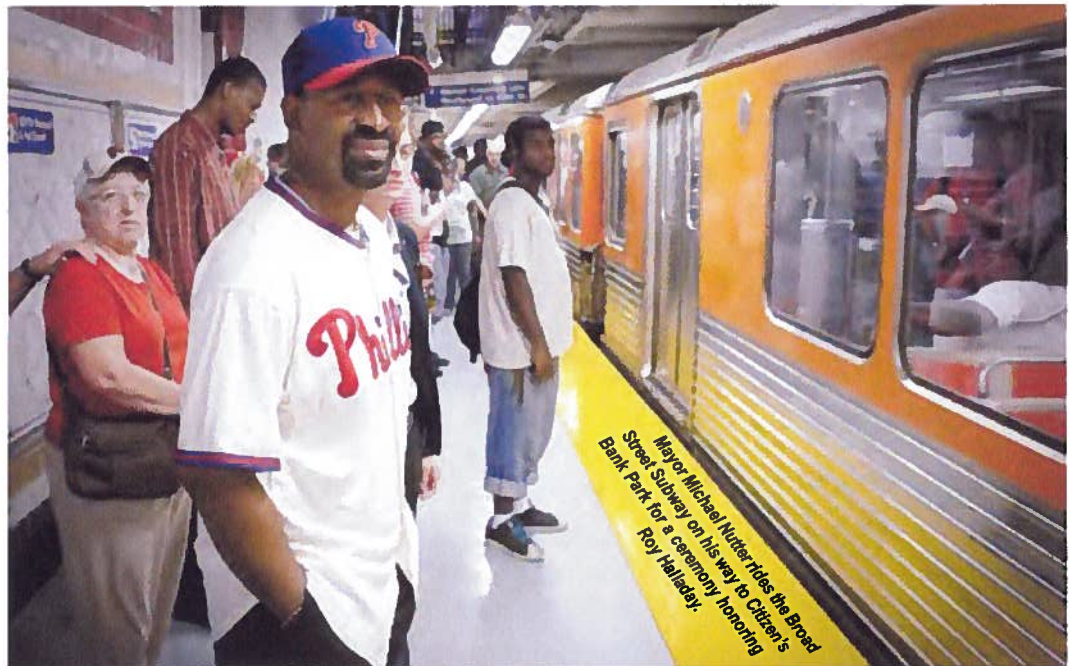
**How is the City of Philadelphia affected by illegal immigrants?**

"I would probably have to say yes, in the sense that a person with undocumented status is not likely to report a crime, or if they are victimized. If you don't have a social security it is also probable that you are not paying taxes on money that you may earn, and the city loses that potential income as well. I want people to feel in an immigrant friendly city, that they could enjoy what we have, get in touch with the Federal Agencies and figure out their paperwork situation. I been very strong on the issue of immigration, first of all, we need one national policy and not 50 different state policies. I am co-chair of an organization called "Partnership for a New American Economy", formed by a group of Mayor's who has focused on the Issues of Immigration.

A poll that came out yesterday revealed that the majority of Philadelphians feel that immigrants are a positive components of what Philadelphia is all about. I have been a supporter of the Dream Act, clearly the children are American citizens, and they should not have their mother and father or other family members uprooted or taken away from them because it splits those families apart. We are a country where we want to keep families together. Anything short of a person literally having a criminal record, we should figure out how to keep that individual here. That person should be fully a part of the American society, get a social security number, pay taxes, take care of their kids, open a business or work somewhere and live out the American dream".

**More than 6 in 10 Latinos in the United States say discrimination is a major problem. Do you face the same problem in the City of Philadelphia?**

"We don't have a poll or documented data on that. I have been in Philadelphia all my life and I pay attention to what's going on and I feel that Latinos feel some level of discrimination whether in the country or in Philadelphia. It is the same with Asians or any of the ethnic groups. Sometimes women express that they feel discriminated, or those that have physical challenges, the handicap, so there is no getting around the fact that in 2012, in the United States of America, there are still issues of racism, sexism or discrimination against people in the LGBT community. We are not a



Mayor Michael Nutter rides the Broad Street Subway on his way to Citizen's Bank Park for a ceremony honoring Roy Halladay.

COURTESY CITY OF PHILADELPHIA. PHOTOGRAPH BY MITCHELL LEFF

perfect society and my role is to make sure that our policies are fair and don't tolerate discrimination. We work every day to make sure that everyone has equal access and opportunities".

**The Latino and Hispanic population is tremendously important to the City of Philadelphia. Lifting children and their parents out of poverty is one of the greatest challenges that the City has, and as I mentioned at the inauguration, the two biggest issues for us here in the City are Education and Public Safety.**

For the first time in U.S. history, the largest single group of poor children in any racial or ethnic category is Hispanic. Is this rate the same in Philadelphia? What City programs are put in place in order to reduce poverty in Philadelphia?

"I don't know if that is a Philadelphia rate, that's more of a national rate. I think that given the size of the population, African Americans make about 44%, Latinos about 12%, and I think that just based on those numbers we can easily assume that Latino and African American children are probably the highest proportion of children living in poverty of the various ethnic groups in the city of Philadelphia. We spent a significant amount of the City's budget, outside of the Public Safety sector, on programs and services designed to try to reduce poverty. Whether it's in Health and Human Services, Health Department or Department of Human Services, we get funded from the Federal Government or Community Development Block Grants to deal with affordable housing, issues and economic opportunity and work force development.

Our administration has been tremendously supportive of economic development projects in areas where Latino population is predominant

whether is at Centro De Oro, on 5th Street, working with Taller on their development projects, with Nilda Ruiz on APM, or in any number of projects and activities. There is never enough money to go around. I have also been supportive of different schools programs, with both Reverend Cortez and the work with their charter schools.

The Latino and Hispanic population is tremendously important to the City of Philadelphia. Lifting children and their parents out of poverty is one of the greatest challenges that the City has, and as I mentioned at the inauguration, the two biggest issues for us here in the City are Education and Public Safety. Education impacts both, the Public Safety component and poverty, that's why I am such hard driving on the issue of Education because it solves the other two biggest problem that the City faces, whether you are a Latino, African American, White or Asian, that's what will save the City".

Obesity affects a high percentage of the Hispanic Population. Sweetened drinks are in big part responsible for overweight in the US. Is the City of Philadelphia willing to set tougher laws in order to reduce obesity?

"We have certainly been trying. We have a grant that we are still working on that we got from the CDC, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) on both Obesity and Smoking Satiation. For two years in a row our effort was encouraged to sweet and sugar beverages, a tremendous amount of pushback from the beverage industry and to be honest with you some of that pushback came from some components of the Latino community, from the folks selling sodas at the stores or bodegas. They were supportive of the anti-legislation, so the community may feel that obesity is a problem, specifically sweet and sugar beverages, but the industry dominated the debate and discussion. I am not sure of what we will do on that issue, and obviously I am still very much interested in it, sweet and sugar beverages are not the only thing that causes obesity but they are certainly a component, and easily replaceable. Part of the reason why we took this challenge is because many of the companies that make sodas also make 100% fruit juice and water, so you can substitute soda with water very easily, for something else that is in fact healthier. I have one component of the community saying that obesity is a problem and another component saying you

are going to destruct my business and cause the loss of jobs, which is not true. We are going to keep fighting".

We recently published stories focused on Global Philadelphia with David Torres, and PhillyRising with Adé Fequa and Joandells Márquez. Could you please comment on these City programs?

"David Torres was here for a while and got kind of stolen from Global Philadelphia. It came early on as an executive order during my first term, that we will require language access plans, for each of the departments and agencies developing policies to make sure that people that don't speak English are still able to communicate with the government. David is so passionate about this issue and I support that passion. PhillyRising, what a great idea, what a great program, it really is about going into some of the toughest neighborhoods in the city not with, "we know what's best approach", but a "please tell us what you think is best" approach. That spirit of commitment and cooperation enables PhillyRising programs to be successful because it's been driven by the community telling us what their needs are and we respond to address those things. When we work together there is great benefit, I love to go there and watch them work".

I have asked you this on previous occasions. When would you address a Hispanic audience speaking in Spanish?

"Well first I have to learn Spanish. I have picked up a few words here and there. It is certainly a goal of mine, even if I could not give a whole speech or address, I would like to be able to at least say a few sentences or a paragraph, that's something that can work on in the next four years".

It's incredible that this city has a statue of Rocky, but not one of Joe Frazier. Are there plans to have a monument in honor of Smokin' Joe in the City of Philadelphia?

"We are going to fix that. There is a lot of discussion going on about that, we have talked to Joe's family and you'll be hearing more about that in the future. He should be recognized, he was a great champion, great Philadelphian and a great American. We plan to do something in that regard".