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***African American Clergy Leaders Support Immigration Reform Campaign***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – This week, Reverend Luis Cortés, Jr., President of Esperanza and Chairman of the *Esperanza For America* campaign, convened a group of prominent African American clergy from across the country with Hispanic clergy and faith leaders to discuss the issue of immigration reform. The purpose of this meeting was to begin building an African American/Latino coalition in support of Esperanza’s national campaign for comprehensive immigration reform. Esperanza is one of the largest Hispanic faith-based networks in the United States with a national network of 12,000 faith and community-based organizations.

“Today, African American and Hispanic clergy were able to hold an honest dialogue and found common ground on this important issue that affects the faith community across ethnic lines. I am proud to join with such a distinguished group of clergy to move the issue of immigration reform forward,” said the Reverend Cortés. “The biblical basis for immigration reform is a bond that brings our communities together to fight for the immigrant community.”

“I am excited to partner with *Esperanza for America* to ensure that we get comprehensive immigration reform passed,” stated the Reverend Orlando Findlayter, Chairman of Churches United to Save and Heal (CUSH). “CUSH is now playing an active role encouraging the Caribbean community to stand with the Latino community to ensure we have victory. The blood that unites us is thicker than the water that divides us.”

“We are proud to join Reverend Cortés and *Esperanza for America*, and to commit our support for the passage of immigration reform legislation,” said Reverend Dr. Wallace Smith, senior pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. “Leadership is needed on this issue and we are glad to step up to add our voices to others in the African American community who are advocating for immigration reform.”

The meeting included clergy representing African American churches from D.C. to Sacramento and concluded with a visit to the White House. The clergy met with White House officials, to demonstrate that African American and Latino communities are working together on this social justice issue, and to ask the President to continue encouraging the Senate to move forward with reform legislation.

The Esperanza for America campaign will use the Esperanza network as a base, drawn from trusted faith leaders across the country, and is working to engage thousands of people of faith at the grassroots and grass tops. The campaign will update individual and organizational members on volunteer opportunities and legislative priorities, encouraging them to mobilize their communities and contact their elected officials in support of comprehensive reform. The campaign aims to ensure that the voices of the 65% or more of Americans who support immigration reform, including Hispanics, are heard by Congress and answered with action.

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