

## Five ways to bridge the inequality gap

By Alvaro Huerta McClatchy-Tribune News Service (MCT) | Posted: Friday, May 9, 2014 8:03 am

The talk about income inequality is all the rage these days. Now it's time to do something about it.

As the rich have gotten much, much richer, the rest of us have fallen behind — especially Latinos.

“From 2005 to 2009, median household wealth (all assets minus all debt) among Latinos fell by 66 percent, compared with a drop of 53 percent among blacks and 16 percent among whites,” according to a report by the Pew Research Center. And during a similar period, the poverty rate rose faster for Latinos (reaching 26.6 percent) than for any other group, the report noted.

Yet, you don't need to be a low-wage Latino worker or a Ph.D. in economics to let people know how earning \$7.25 per hour in this country is not enough to purchase a home or rent an affordable apartment in a safe neighborhood, own a reliable vehicle with insurance, secure health insurance and purchase other goods.

How many homes must a Latina domestic worker clean, for instance, in order to purchase a laptop computer for her child?

How many front lawns must a Latino gardener mow to send his daughter to college?

This is not to imply that all Latinos toil in the informal or unregulated economy. Latinos, as a heterogeneous group, represent productive individuals in diverse occupational fields within the formal economy, such as the banking, construction, education, entertainment, legal, media, medical and real estate professions.

The point is that no one in the United States who works hard should be left by the wayside.

Here are five ways to bridge the inequality gap, not just for Latinos but for all underpaid ethnic groups and workers.

First, raise the minimum wage.

Second, produce more affordable housing.

Third, spend more on public education, K-12.

Fourth, make public universities tuition-free for all who qualify academically.

And, fifth, increase taxes on the wealth and income of the top 1 percent.

All residents deserve the right to secure their fair share of the elusive American Dream.

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### ABOUT THE WRITER

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