Our Shared Future, Reckoning with Our Racial Past Forum: Creating Financial Access for All Cooperative Latino Credit Union

Forum Date: August 26, 2021

Video Length: 5 minutes, 19 seconds

Graphics on screen
Our Shared Future
Reckoning with Our Racial Past
Smithsonian Forum

Narrator

Graphics on screen
Creating Financial Access for All
Cooperative Latino Credit Union

Man 1
We applied for just a simple savings account at one of the biggest banks in America.

Woman 1
It was a little difficult because they asked us for certain documents which we did not have. Often we are frightened -- How are we going to buy a house here?

Man 1
That got me into the credit union. As soon as I walk in, they embrace us. It felt like a family.

Graphics on screen
Creating Financial Access for All
Cooperative Latino Credit Union

Graphics on screen
Durham, North Carolina

Graphics on screen
Luís Pastor
CEO, Cooperativa Latina Credit Union

Luís
We started in the year 2000, in Durham. At the end of the 90's, beginning of the 2000's a new community began to arrive...Immigrants filling jobs that nobody else was taking
It was very difficult to open a bank account to cash your checks...accumulate deposits or send funds to your country where your family was waiting for it. At that moment the Cooperativa arises as a Community-driven solution...to do something better.

**Graphics on screen**
Silvia Rincón  
SVP of Member Experience  
Cooperativa Latin Credit Union

**Silvia**  
Trade unions are not for profit organizations. So that means that the money that they make, they need to put it back into the membership or the people that they serve, banks are for profit.

**Graphics on screen**
Vicky García  
SVP of Strategic Initiatives  
Cooperativa Latin Credit Union

**Vicky**  
The mission of the credit union has always been the same. We are here to create economic opportunity for all.

**Graphics on screen**
Miguel Angel Fuentes  
Member, Cooperativa Latina Credit Union

**Miguel**  
My wife told me about it and I did not follow her lead.

**Graphics on screen**
Edith Fuentes  
Member, Cooperativa Latina Credit Union

**Edith**  
I insisted and he kept saying "No" until I told him they were offering classes.

**Miguel**  
They have financial classes in Spanish.

**Edith**  
We took the financial classes, and it was the best decision we could have made. From those classes we learned that we could apply for a mortgage. We thought "Us! A house! No way!"
**Miguel**  
The moment that we came from the signing all the papers, that jingling of those keys, it felt like my future was being handed to me. It felt like my wife had a place that she could call home and my daughter a stable household.

**Graphics on screen**  
María Mozqueda  
Member, Cooperativa Latina Credit Union

**María**  
Because we're Latinos, they helped us a lot to get a loan...for a van for my daughter who has special needs. She has a condition called hydrosephalia. She doesn't speak or walk. The van is very important to take her to appointments, to school.

**Luís**  
They needed a kind of vehicle that financial institutions do not finance. We don't have a program for it either, but based on the philosophy that no immigrant comes here to default on a loan, we found a way to do it. From the beginning we decided to offer loans with or without official credit history. Because credit history is not a good indicator of whether a person will pay back a loan.

**Silvia**  
Actually, our repayment rate is 99.2% when a lot of financial institutions think that the communities that we serve are "risky."

**Vicky**  
We do not do risk-based lending. Everyone or everybody comes through the door will get exactly the same interest rate.

**Luís**  
Because what happens in the American financial system is when a person speaks with an accent -- or has darker skin, or has a name you can't pronounce -- we end up paying more.

**Silvia**  
Over the years, we have gained our member's trust. We get to know them. We have learned that we can go beyond financial products and services. So we have expanded to create programs that can have a bigger impact in their lives.

**María**  
My daughter Ingrid, her dream has always been to be a nurse. The Cooperativa Latina offers scholarships. And thank God they gave her a scholarship for four years. She graduated from Trinity University in Washington DC.

**Silvia**  
She's the first in the entire family that is graduating from college, that went to college and now she's a nurse.
**María**
What they provide for the people and the community is compassion. It's touched my life.

**Miguel**
It has changed how I see the world financially.

**Luís**
The true heroes, the protagonists of this story are the members who come into the Cooperativa. We have over 100,000 people who own the institution and decide what it should be -- A place they can trust.

**Graphics on screen**
Watch the entire forum and view additional resources at OurSharedFuture.SI.edu/race.