

**Table 2. Immigrants by Country of Origin, City of Boston and Surrounding Towns (2006)**

	Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH					
	Metro Area		Boston City		Cambridge City	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Population	4,455,217	100.0	575,187	100.0	89,804	100.0
Total Foreign-Born Population:	706,422	15.9	156,591	27.2	25,851	28.8
Europe:	162,488	3.6	26,044	4.5	5,798	6.4
Northern Europe:	34,644	0.8	5,725	1.0	1,485	1.6
United Kingdom	17,633	0.4	1,861	0.3	686	0.8
Ireland	13,743	0.3	3,864	0.7	263	0.3
Western Europe	19,874	0.4	3,261	0.6	1,121	1.2
Southern Europe:	53,322	1.2	5,955	1.0	1,444	1.6
Italy	22,586	0.5	3,771	0.6	476	0.5
Portugal	20,181	0.4	177	--	620	0.7
Eastern Europe	54,371	1.2	11,103	1.9	1,748	1.9
Asia:	202,910	4.5	35,992	6.2	10,216	11.3
China	65,831	1.5	13,679	2.4	3,674	5.0
India	34,336	0.8	1,870	0.3	1,051	1.2
Vietnam	25,111	0.6	8,714	1.5	225	0.2
Africa:	53,328	1.2	15,975	2.8	3,474	3.9
Americas:	286,269	6.4	78,334	13.6	6,195	6.9
Latin America:	262,081	5.9	76,372	13.3	5,687	6.3
Caribbean	111,169	2.5	42,604	7.4	3,239	3.6
Mexico	9,667	0.2	2,515	0.4	174	0.2
El Salvador	20,500	0.5	5,915	1.0	200	0.2
Brazil	56,247	1.3	6,990	1.2	39	--
Colombia	18,374	0.4	6,340	1.1	227	0.2
Canada	23,845	0.5	1,913	0.3	508	0.6

N: absolute number --; less than 0.1%

Data source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "2006 American Community Survey." Data are estimates based on a sample. For more information, such as margin of error, sampling error, and so on, see US Census. Percentages estimated by Andrea Carla.

Scholars and activists alike have been especially interested in tacking immigrant settlement patterns with an eye to identifying multiracial and multiethnic neighborhoods in which no one nationality or race dominates social and political life (the assumption being that the possibilities for coalition building might be especially promising in such diverse communities) (Sanjek 1998; Browning, Marshall, and Taub 1990; Hattam 2007; Haney-López 2005). In the greater Boston metropolitan area, ethnic and racial diversity is especially notable in Jamaica Plain, East Cambridge, and parts of Somerville. While some neighborhoods continue to be dominated by a single national origin or racial group (Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Mattapan, and Roxbury in Boston and the corridor from Kendall through Central, Harvard, and Porter Squares are all predominantly either white or Black. While Chinatown and East Boston remain predominantly Chinese and Hispanic respectively), the general pattern has been for a decline in ethnic and racial separation over the last twenty years (Allen and Turner 2004). Demographics again suggest that the time might be ripe for forging new political identifications and alliances.

### **COMPETING COALITIONS: MIRA AND GBIO**

We began this research with an eye to assessing coalition building between African Americans and immigrants during the 2006 rallies. Were new immigrants changing the political landscape by reconfiguring the Black-white divide, as many scholars have been anticipating? Our research quickly led us to reframe the question. The presence or absence of a Black-brown coalition seemed too crude a measure of the changes at hand. More subtle shifts were afoot that required a more focused lens. The issue was not whether coalitions were being formed, but rather one of acknowledging competing coalitions. Many organizations were trying to mobilize diverse populations into competing coalitions.

Two of the most active organizations working to build broad coalitions across identity groups in the Boston area are the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) and the Greater Boston

Interfaith Organization (GBIO). Both have stood the test of time, with MIRA being established in 1988 and GBIO in 1996. Both also have substantial staff and active programs and offer a perfect starting point for exploring coalition building in contemporary Boston. Attending to the differences between MIRA and GBIO also helps capture one of the central political fault-lines running through contemporary immigrant politics in Boston and elsewhere: the difficulty of holding race and immigration together in the same organization. While both organizations have an impressive record of coalition building, they reach out to different constituents on very different terms. As of now, however, neither organization has forged the Black-brown coalition that many activists and academics have been anticipating.

MIRA is a Boston-based nonprofit organization with 100 member organizations and a staff of 15. Its mission is to "promote rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees," largely through shaping public policies that affect their lives. Organizers at MIRA were closely connected to the immigrant rights rallies in 2006, with Marconi Almeida helping to plot the route for the April 10 rally. Much of the group's work has focused on lobbying the state and federal governments; tellingly, the MIRA website provides contact information to local state and federal politicians and encourages members to lobby on behalf of key immigrant rights concerns. A viewer of the group's website is likely to encounter calls to lobby state-level politicians. For example, on May 4, 2009, the two lead items on the MIRA website were "Immigrant's Day at the State House 2009" and "MIRA FY10" in which a list of budgetary amendments was provided and readers were urged to contact their legislators. Interestingly, a web link was provided to facilitate communication between MIRA members and their relevant legislative officers.<sup>13</sup>

Even a cursory glance at MIRA makes clear its investment in coalition building: this is not an identity- or nationality-based organization, but an organization that works to forge connections *across* different national origin groups. As its name suggests, one of the important difference MIRA seeks to bridge is that between *immigrants* and *refugees*. This is important