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The Role of Nonprofits in Organizing the Latino  
Community in Central Ohio

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies (International Migration)

by

Laura A. Vazquez

Committee in Charge:

Professor Robert Alvarez, Chair  
Professor Tomás Jiménez  
Professor Marisa Abrajano

2008

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University of California, San Diego

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Role of Nonprofits in Organizing the Latino  
Community in Central Ohio

by

Laura A. Vazquez

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (International Migration)

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Robert Alvarez, Chair

This thesis presents a case study of the growing and diverse Latino community and the organizations working with this community in Central Ohio. Since the 1990s, Central Ohio has seen an increase in the number of foreign-born residents. There has been an uneven incorporation of new immigrants in Central Ohio marked by recognition of the need for immigrant labor, but lacking the infrastructure to adapt to a linguistically and culturally different population. Nonprofit organizations have responded to the needs of the young Latino community in Central Ohio and have provided critical services. By examining the literature on nonprofits and advocacy, as

well as the literature on new immigrant destinations, I argue that the immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations in Central Ohio are developing into organizations that are not only providing social services; they are representing the political and social claims of the burgeoning Latino community.



## **Introduction**

Beginning in the 1990s, communities across the United States began to see an increase in their number of foreign-born residents. The arrival of immigrants in locales that do not have a history of immigration has had tremendous impacts on these communities. Studies of non-traditional gateway cities are growing and providing insights into the tensions and adjustments that these communities are experiencing. The focus of my research is on the nonprofit organizations working with Latino immigrants in one of these new destinations — Central Ohio. As a new destination for Latino immigrants, Central Ohio offers many opportunities for research. By examining the literature on new destinations and nonprofit advocacy, my motivation is to understand how nonprofit organizations working with an emerging immigrant community are able to advocate for their clients despite the restrictions placed on nonprofit lobbying.

The nonprofit literature has traditionally described immigrant-serving nonprofits as strictly service providers, filling in the gaps where government services are not available. As nonprofit scholars David Suárez and Hokyu Hwang state, “Many organizations, perhaps most, simply provide a service and adapt to a given operating environment. Lobbying involves a decision by organizations to alter the environment around them through a very formal and regulated process” (2008, 101). There is evidence, however, that immigrant-serving nonprofits are deciding to blend their roles as service providers with activism on behalf of their clients. There are difficulties in navigating the ‘formal and regulated process’ of lobbying therefore, immigrant-serving organizations have had to adapt and use their differences from other interest groups to create access to the political process.

This work offers a descriptive analysis of the nonprofit organizations serving Latino immigrants in Central Ohio. The purpose is to examine to what extent the immigrant-serving organizations are able to represent the needs of a community that has been experiencing significant growth and changes in the past few years. I decided to focus on Columbus, Ohio not only because it is a new destination for Latino immigrants, but also because of my familiarity with the city. My family moved to Central Ohio in 1985 when there were only a few Latinos in the area. I grew up there when there was no visible Latino community. While my family still lives in Central Ohio, I moved away during the mid 1990s and became involved with immigrant-serving organizations in cities with larger, established immigrant communities. My perspective of Columbus is as a long time resident, and also as someone familiar with metropolitan areas that are very different such as Washington, D.C. and New York City.

My observations of the immigrant-serving nonprofits in Columbus are informed by case studies of immigrant-serving nonprofits in traditional receiving communities, such as San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles. In order to draw distinctions between those case studies and the case of Columbus, I looked at Ohio census data, local news coverage, and community organization reports. I also conducted interviews with representatives from nonprofit organizations in the summer and winter of 2007. I use the concept of cultural citizenship developed by anthropologist Renato Rosaldo in examining the role of the organizations in the growing Latino community, because it provides “an alternative perspective to better comprehend cultural processes that result in community building and in political claims raised by marginalized groups in the broader society” (Flores and Benmayor 1997, 15). Cultural citizenship is useful in looking at a new and

growing community and allows marginalized groups to define themselves as distinct communities through the activities of daily life. I argue that the organizations in Columbus are helping to make the claims of new residents in Columbus heard.

This research is timely in light of the current debates on immigration and immigrant incorporation. Throughout the country, there are cases of intolerance towards the foreign-born and signs of xenophobia; and Columbus is no different. The observations from Columbus have particular salience because of the increasingly localized policies towards immigrants. At a point when municipal governments are making more decisions affecting the lives of new community members, nonprofit organizations working with these constituents have to take on an increasingly important role as representatives of their clients.

### *Methodology*

To learn about the organizations working with Latino immigrants in Central Ohio, I conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with people associated with three different immigrant-serving nonprofits in Columbus, Ohio in the summer and winter of 2007. Each interview lasted about one hour and I conducted multiple interviews with some of the organizations' staff members. In the interviews I asked about the mission and the work of the organization, their clients, and types of advocacy activities. I also attended five events organized by the nonprofits where I spoke with the staff. Local newspapers and community organization reports have also been useful in collecting information about the community.

I selected the three organizations because their clients are Latino immigrants. I did not contact representatives from organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, The Legal Aid Society, or St. Vincent Family Centers whose clients include Latinos, but are not the primary beneficiaries of their services. The number of organizations that are serving the Latino community in Central Ohio is very small. According to a report published by two nonprofits in Columbus, of 146 grassroots service providers in Central Ohio in 2005, only 6 identified their primary population as Latino/Hispanic (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). During the time period that I was in Central Ohio to conduct interviews, I tried repeatedly to contact an organization that I heard was providing social services to the Latino community. The telephone number was not in service, and after finally tracking down an address for the organization, found that there was no one available in the office building where the organization was supposed to be located. This is not uncommon for small, grassroots service providers. According to the same report by the Central Ohio nonprofits, “there is continual change in the landscape of grassroots organizations, with some going out of existence and new organizations emerging” (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005, 48).

I also selected organizations that were service providers and not arts organizations, hometown associations or social clubs. I focused on these organizations because they are active in local issues and provide services to the Latino community, and they are formal organizations with 501(c) 3 tax status. Although there are many churches providing assistance to the Latino community, I did not include them in my research because I am focusing on organizations whose primary mission is to provide social services. The organizations I contacted do not present a random or representative

sample; they are the most visible organizations that are frequently cited in the press and are well known in the Latino community. Additionally, I did not conduct any formal interviews with beneficiaries of the organizations services. While the clients of the organizations would undoubtedly provide valuable information, the scope of the project is limited to the opinions and attitudes of the service providers.

In order to provide context for the reader, my descriptive analysis begins with an overview of Central Ohio and the dramatic demographic changes occurring there. After presenting the data that is available on the growing Latino community, I discuss the nonprofit sector generally and provide examples of the advocacy by immigrant-serving nonprofits in traditional immigrant destinations. Finally, I discuss what is occurring in the Latino community in Central Ohio and the activities of the nonprofits working with the community.

## **Chapter 1. The Latino Community in Central Ohio**

The (U.S.) Census estimates the Latino community in Franklin County grew by 21 percent from 2000 to 2003, but there are signs that the growth is even higher. Based on vital statistics from the Columbus Health Department, the birth rate for Latino women in this area has increased by almost 500 percent between 1995 and 2002. I've been here in Columbus only two years, and I have seen the change. (Hugo Melgar-Quiñonez, Ohio State University professor in Filipic 2005, 30).

According to 2006 Census information, Latinos make up 3.5 percent of the population of 1.1 million residents in Franklin County. While the community is relatively small, its importance lies in its rapid growth. Currently, the Latino population is concentrated in the city of Columbus and makes up 8 percent of the city's population. The Latino community in Central Ohio is estimated to be 60,000 people (Ferenchik 2008a). The figures for the numbers of Latinos in Central Ohio vary widely, but there is agreement that the number grew sharply in a short period of time. According to a nonprofit health group in Columbus, the number of Latinas giving birth in Central Ohio increased 776 percent between 1990 and 2005 (Ferenchik 2008b). In 2004, the number of Latino households in Franklin County increased 7.5 percent, while the overall household increase in the county was only 2 percent (Trowbridge 2006). Another indicator of the growing presence of Latinos is the rising number of Latino owned businesses, which increased by 130 percent from 1997-2002 (Turner 2007). Within the past few years, it has become possible to drive through parts of Columbus and see various Latino owned businesses and restaurants filling once vacant storefronts in the city's landscape of strip malls.

There is an absence of comprehensive data about the Latino community that makes it very difficult to determine the characteristics of this new and growing population in Central Ohio. The data that does exist provides conflicting and inconsistent information. There are many questions that cannot be answered until a comprehensive census of the community is undertaken. For example, it is not known if the majority of the members of the Latino community are internal migrants from other parts of the United States, or if they have migrated directly from their country of origin to Columbus. The new settlement pattern, however, is clearly visible in the labor force, schools, the appearance of Spanish-language newspapers and radio, soccer leagues, new businesses, social services, and churches. For example, Central Ohio is now home to at least five weekly and biweekly Spanish-language newspapers, a local television station, a magazine and at least two radio stations (Turner and Czekalinski 2007). Also, the population of students in the Columbus City Schools District is growing. In 1995-96, less than 1 percent of the 60,000 students in the district were Latino, and in 2005-06, 4.7 percent were Latino (Richards 2006).

By looking at news reports, community organization reports, and talking to service providers, a sketch of the Latino community can be compiled. A strong economy and available jobs drew many Latinos to Columbus throughout the 1990s. Latinos have found jobs in construction, hotels, restaurants, and nurseries.<sup>1</sup> About half of the Latino immigrants in central Ohio are from Mexico (Czekalinski and Trowbridge 2007) while the rest are from Central and South America. According to Joseph Mas, Chairman of the

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<sup>1</sup> According to a study conducted by The Ohio State University, 72 percent of the workforce in Ohio nurseries is Hispanic (Curet 2007).

Ohio Hispanic Coalition, approximately two thirds of the 60,000 Latinos in the Columbus area are undocumented (Ferenchik and Czekalinski 2008). Latinos in Columbus are more likely to be uninsured than any other ethnic group (Ferenchik 2008b). Josue Vicente, Executive Director of the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, explained that the Latino community was originally made up of men who came alone to work in Columbus, but with time, the men were joined in Central Ohio by their wives (interview August 8, 2007). According to Maria DeGregorio, Program Coordinator of the Job Placement Program of Catholic Social Services in Columbus, Latinos are coming to Central Ohio because of the opportunities available. She believes that there are a lot of internal migrants coming to Columbus from other states because other places are “saturated” but in Columbus, “the employers are interested in hiring Latinos because of their famed work ethic, and there are still a lot of opportunities, unlike other places where employers are not as interested in hiring Latinos” (interview August 13, 2007).

### *A Picture of Central Ohio*

Central Ohio is changing. It quickly and recently became home to thousands of foreign-born. The region, which does not have a history of immigration, is becoming home to unprecedented numbers of immigrants from various parts of the world. In the past, it was not an attractive region to immigrants because it was less industrialized than Ohio’s northeastern cities. Northeastern cities, such as Cleveland, attracted European immigrants in the early 1900s because of the widely available jobs in heavy industry and manufacturing. In the 1940s, the percentages of foreign-born residents were quite high in Northeastern Ohio. Although the foreign-born at that time were overwhelmingly



European, there were migrants from Latin America who also worked in the mills and factories of the Midwest, and there were some small communities of Mexican migrant workers in cities such as Toledo (Mendez 2005). In 1940, Cleveland had more than double the national average of percentage of residents who were foreign-born (20.5%), while Columbus ranked the lowest in Ohio with a mere 3.9% of residents who were foreign-born (Otiso and Smith 2005).

Since 1940, Columbus has overtaken Cleveland as the primary location of foreign-born residents in Ohio (Otiso and Smith 2005). Columbus is now an attractive destination for immigrants because it has a greater concentration of jobs in the growing service and information sectors (Otiso and Smith 2005). While the rest of Ohio has experienced significant job losses, Columbus has posted employment gains consistently since 1940 (Otiso and Smith 2005). Columbus is now the largest city in Ohio (the 15<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States) and the population of Franklin County in 2006 was 1.1 million residents. Columbus is home to the state capital, the Ohio State University, plus seven other colleges and universities. It is also the headquarters for multiple national retailers and insurance companies. From 1990 to 2000, Franklin County gained more residents than any other county in Ohio (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005, Parker et al, 2005) and the growth is continuing— it is one of only two urban counties in Ohio to experience positive population growth between 2002 and 2004 (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). The population growth is partly fueled by the increase in foreign-born residents living in Central Ohio. In the late 1990s, 28,000 immigrants came to the greater Columbus area, the first time in the state's history that central Ohio drew more immigrants than Cleveland and Cuyahoga County (Parker et al

2005). No other metropolitan area in Ohio is growing faster in foreign-born residents (Columbus Foundation 2006).

The increase of foreign-born residents in Franklin County occurred recently and rapidly. Like many cities nationwide, Columbus experienced a decline in foreign-born residents from 1940 to 1970 (Otiso and Smith, 2005). However, in the 1990s, immigrants came to the United States in record numbers (Bump, et al., 2005) and Central Ohio saw an increase in the foreign-born population. From 1990 to 2003, the percent of foreign-born residents in Franklin County grew from 3.4 percent of the total Franklin County population in 1990 (32,235) to 8.0 percent in 2003 (84,854) (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). Although Franklin County has fewer foreign-born residents than the national percentage of 12 percent, it has more foreign-born residents than cities like Cleveland, Detroit, and Indianapolis (Turner et al 2006). The foreign-born population in Franklin County continues to grow. Since 2000, international migration has accounted for 82 percent of Franklin County's net population growth (Columbus Foundation 2006; Turner et al 2006).

The growth of the Latino community in Central Ohio is not occurring in a vacuum. Since the mid-1990s, Franklin County has become home to thousands of immigrants and refugees from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). In fact, sixty percent of Central Ohio immigrants come from 70 countries (Pyle 2006). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Franklin County's foreign-born population is comprised of immigrants from Asia (38 percent), Latin America (24 percent), Africa (22 percent), and Europe (13 percent) (U.S. Census 2006).

According to a study by local community organizations, Franklin County is both an initial destination from immigrants' country of origin and as they move from other parts of the United States (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). The foreign-born in Central Ohio are recent migrants; 50 percent entered the United States between 1995 and 2000 (Otiso and Smith 2005). The trend of recent arrivals has continued; 31 percent of Franklin County's foreign-born residents entered the United States between 2000 and 2004, compared with 23 percent of foreign-born residents of Ohio and 18 percent of the foreign-born nationwide (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005).

Central Ohio has long been a mostly homogenous population, with 80 percent of its residents identifying as white. However, the area is becoming more diverse because of refugee resettlement, movement of immigrants from traditional receiving areas, and because of an economic shift in Central Ohio that is attracting more immigrants than ever before.

*Refugee Resettlement:*

Columbus is now home to the second largest Somali community in the United States behind St. Paul/Minneapolis. The number of Somalis in Central Ohio is varied and ranges from a "conservative estimate" of 45,000 up to 80,000 (Turner 2008). In 2004 alone there were 2,008 refugee/asylee arrivals in Franklin County, an increase of 42 percent since 2002 and in 2004, Central Ohio was home to 70 percent of all refugees/asylees living in Ohio (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). Like the Latino community, the Somali community has grown in a short period of time and has resulted in new businesses, restaurants, media, and organizations.

*Movement of People from Traditional Receiving Areas:*

Migration, particularly of people from Latin America, has been transformed in the past few years. Instead of something that was focused in a few states, migration has become a national experience. Scholars of U.S. immigration have defined six states as traditional destination states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, and Texas; however, between 1990 and 2000, immigrant populations in new destinations grew dramatically.<sup>2</sup> The 2000 Census signaled that there had been a dramatic shift in migration settlement patterns. From 1990 to 2000, the percentage of Mexican-born persons in the U.S. living outside the six traditional destination states more than doubled from 10 percent to 25 percent (Leach 2005). Two factors influencing the movement of internal migrants are high housing costs in traditional receiving areas and overcrowding (Leach 2005).

Columbus, Ohio fits into the new trend of settlement in a place without a history of immigration. While there is no definitive information explaining the draw of Central Ohio for immigrants at this time, there is an expanding literature on new destinations that can inform future studies of the Latino community in Central Ohio. The literature provides various explanations for the shift from the traditional receiving states to the new destinations, such as the militarization of the Southwestern border which pushes migrants to cross and continue further inland away from the heightened border enforcement to new areas (Marrow 2005, Cornelius 2005). Scholars also point to increasing anti-immigrant sentiment in California as a factor in the shifting migration patterns. California had been

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<sup>2</sup> Singer 2004, Zúñiga and León Hernández 2005, Kandel and Parrado 2005, Marrow 2005, Gozdziaik and Martin 2005, Durand et al 2000, and Massey et al 2002 are among the works on new destinations.

a major receiving state until it became a less attractive destination during the 1990s due to rising costs of living and hostility towards immigrants which culminated in the passage of proposition 187 barring undocumented immigrants from receiving publicly funded assistance (Marrow 2005, Striffler 2007). Additionally, the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) granted legal status to several million immigrants who were then able to relocate to new locales, and who started an “internal migratory flow” (Zúñiga and Hernández León 2005, xvi).

*Economic and Demographic Shifts:*

According to scholars Victor Zúñiga and Ruben Hernández-León, the shift of immigrants to new destinations can best be understood by looking at regional economies. They state, “The principal detonating factor is the profound local and regional transformation. Absent these transformations in the economic structure the presence of Mexican workers is hard to understand” (2005, xx). Positive developments in the economy of Central Ohio did occur and acted as a magnet for new immigrants. It is unclear if the other factors mentioned above drove the migration to Columbus, because it is unknown if the Latino community in Columbus is comprised mainly of recent immigrants or if there are large numbers of migrants who moved from the West.

Since 1990, Columbus has added jobs at the national average, unlike other cities in Ohio (Kotkin 2008). Going back to the mid-1980s, retailers set their eyes on Columbus for new developments when they became aware that there was tremendous growth opportunity in the region (it was an “under retailed” market). During the 1990s, Central Ohio experienced not only growth in employment and in retail sales, but also in manufacturing, export values and personal incomes.

Zúñiga and Hernández-León argue that the emergence of new destinations for immigrant settlement arose not only because of economic changes, but also because of demographic shifts that create a shortage of laborers (2005). The demographics in Ohio certainly support this argument: native-born Ohioans are moving to other states, including college-educated people between 28 and 50 years old (Kotkin 2008). Additionally, the native-born population is aging. A demographer described Ohio's growth rate as "snail-like" due to people getting older, moving to other places and not having a lot of children (Gebolys 2008). Like many places in the United States throughout the 1990s that were experiencing economic and demographic shifts, Central Ohio was experiencing rapid growth of immigrant populations that it had never seen before.

### *The Response to the Increase in the Foreign-Born Population*

The response to the increase of foreign-born residents in Ohio has been mixed. As in many new receiving communities, there is recognition of the value of the labor participation of the new immigrants, but there is a general unease about the effect of the changing demographics on the status quo. The private sector has recognized the potential presented by the new immigrants, and Central Ohio's banks and insurance companies have been very visible in promoting their services. In Ohio, Latino buying power rose 247 percent from 1990 to 2006, making Latinos sought after clients (Turner and Czekalinski 2007). Businesses ranging from car dealers to budget retailers are spending a lot of money to attract Latinos. Nationwide Insurance Company, which is headquartered

in Columbus, commissioned a multi-million dollar national advertising campaign aimed at the Latino market with two television spots for Spanish-language TV and radio networks and in newspapers (Wolf 2004).

In other aspects, the increase of foreign-born residents has not been met with the same response. According to a poll of approximately 1,200 registered voters in Ohio taken by Quinnipiac University in November 2007, Ohioans are strongly opposed to undocumented immigrants (Rowland and Siegel 2007)<sup>3</sup>. According to the pollsters, Ohioans have similar attitudes to voters nationwide when it comes to undocumented immigrants (Rowland and Siegel 2007). Politicians in Ohio have been tapping into anti-immigrant sentiment during their campaigns in a dynamic and closely contested political atmosphere. During the 1990s, at the same time that the numbers of foreign-born were growing, Republicans had political control throughout the state. In the early 1990s, Ohio Republicans had numerous election victories, and for fourteen years, there have been more Republicans than Democrats in the Ohio congressional delegation. By 2006, Republicans held all statewide offices, and Republicans outnumbered the Democrats in both houses of the state legislature (Almanac of American Politics 2008). In 2006, Republicans in Ohio and across the country faced difficult re-election campaigns and immigration became a critical issue used by political campaigns across the state in competitive races. As mentioned by political scientist Larry Sabato of a contested race in

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<sup>3</sup> When asked, "In general, how serious a problem do you think illegal immigration is in the United States?" 63 percent of respondents answered "very serious", 26 percent said "somewhat serious", 7 percent said "not very serious", 3 percent said "not a problem at all" and 1 percent are categorized as "don't know/no response". 86 percent of respondents are against providing undocumented immigrants with "government financed health insurance" and 85 percent are opposed to providing undocumented immigrants with "social services such as welfare, food stamps and housing assistance."

Cincinnati, “Although Ohio's 1st district is not close to any national borders, illegal immigration has become the most focused-on issue in the race. Republicans across the country, including Chabot, have been focusing on this issue... Immigration is also likely to fire up the conservative base, improving the odds that it will vote in large numbers” (2006). In a race for the state legislature, a candidate from a district southeast of Columbus used a banner saying: “America: One Language, one Loyalty and one Flag” (Rowland and Siegel 2007). Republicans have not been the only ones sending signals to appear tough on immigration: Zach Space, a Democratic congressman in southern Ohio, has stated that he supports the federal crackdown on undocumented immigrants through workplace raids, “It’s a positive development. They should have been doing this a long time ago” (Space, 2007).

Another measure of the response to the increasing numbers of foreign-born residents is the legislation that has been introduced in the state legislature. In 2006, a bill was introduced by State Representative Bill Seitz, a Republican legislator from Cincinnati, that would establish penalties for hiring undocumented workers, ban undocumented residents from receiving state assistance, would establish an Office of Immigration Compliance in the state attorney general's office to enforce federal and state laws, conduct investigations, and serve as a liaison between Ohio and immigration-related agencies in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, among other provisions (HB 654). Democrats accused the Republicans of introducing the measure in order to mobilize their constituents ahead of the elections with a contentious issue, as they did with a state measure regulating marriage laws in 2004 (Hannah News Service, 2006). There have also been repeated attempts to pass an English-only bill in the state



legislature. In 2006, a bill was introduced to limit government publications to English, but the bill was never voted on. In 2008, a similar bill was introduced. The sponsor of the bill, Republican State Representative Bob Mecklenborg, explained he was introducing the bill to demonstrate the importance of learning English to Ohio's newcomers: "This bill also has an important symbolic function because it sends a clear and concise signal to all those who want to participate in our state as citizens that there are responsibilities, as well as benefits. Recognition that English is the official language of the state is such a responsibility" (Craig 2008). The efforts to pass restrictionist legislation in Ohio fits into the research conducted by political scientists Karthick Ramakrishnan and Tom Wong of municipal immigration-related ordinances which concludes that areas with a strong Republican presence are two times as likely to propose restrictionist ordinances, and one-fourth as likely to propose "pro-immigrant" ones (Ramakrishnan and Wong 2007).

In western Ohio, a sheriff in Butler County has been vocal about his opposition to undocumented immigrants and eight deputies in the county have trained with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to assist with detaining and deporting undocumented immigrants who commit a crime (Ferenchik and Czekalinski 2008). In addition to his public statements about helping to enforce immigration laws, the sheriff has placed two large yellow signs outside the county jail that read "Illegal Aliens Here" with an arrow pointing to the jail (Ludden 2006). Latino business owners have responded that they feel that the sheriff is creating a hostile environment for them and their customers (Ludden 2006).

In another news piece, the associate editor of the state's largest Spanish-language newspaper stated that Latinos across the state are feeling unsettled because of various public safety issues that remain unaddressed by authorities (Quintanilla 2008). According to the article, Latinos in Ohio have been fearful of traveling to Columbus since police put out an alert in 2005 after two-dozen Latinos were robbed in the city by people preying on immigrants who are known to frequently have cash (Quintanilla 2008). Also, in the winter of 2007, four men were brutally killed in their apartment in southern Ohio in what police believe was a robbery, but the case has not been closed (wlwt news 2007). In addition to public safety issues, Latinos face harassment from neighbors in their new communities. On the west side of Columbus, in a neighborhood known as Hilltop, mobile food carts are creating tension. Latinos have been setting up mobile food carts to sell traditional foods and longtime residents of the neighborhood want the carts gone. As a reporter described the situation, "the food wagons are an example of the cultural change sweeping through Columbus neighborhoods: Newcomers bring businesses they knew back home, while residents of a city still relatively inexperienced with large numbers of immigrants wonder how to deal with them" (Ferenchik 2007). The city's zoning official has decided to set up community meetings with neighborhood residents and city officials in order to address the issue (Ferenchik 2007).

The increase in the number of foreign-born residents has highlighted the lack of infrastructure or institutional support for newcomers. Like many other new destinations for immigrants, Central Ohio does not have sufficient bilingual caseworkers or emergency responders or culturally relevant support services. While the challenges of integrating a linguistic minority population may be familiar and routine in traditional

receiving communities, in Central Ohio, there is a lack of experience facing these issues that is still being confronted. In a complicated and tragic case involving young children whose adult relatives in Columbus are undocumented, the child welfare system was put to the test when deciding if the children should be placed with their undocumented relatives, which would be in their best interest, or if they should be placed with strangers who met the legal requirements. The director of Franklin County Children Services admitted that there was confusion on how to respond to the case, and that he foresees similar difficult situations as the agency is forced to deal with the growing immigrant populations. In traditional receiving states, agencies have established practices that are routine in working with immigrants, but as the director of Franklin County Children Services admitted, he was left wondering, “Where’s the handbook on this one?” (Price 2008). Joseph Mas, the Chairman of the Ohio Hispanic Coalition stated in response to the case, “Do I believe that we are geared up right now to serve the Hispanic community and the Somali community? Clearly not, but the gaps are understandable. It’s an old agency. It’s geared up to serve the traditional communities” (Price 2008).

There is some recognition by the state government that increased funding is necessary to meet some critical needs. In the fiscal year 2008 budget, the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs received a little more than \$700,000 for the year, which was a significant increase from the previous year when the agency only received \$181,000 or as the agency director stated “barely enough to keep the lights on” (Abrams 2007). The funding will be used by the office to increase staff, create a community organizations database, build a new website, and to provide grants for community organizations (Abrams 2007). While this significant increase in the one agency is an

important recognition of the growth of the Latino community in Ohio, Josue Vicente, the Executive Director of the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, stated that he needs to attend a lot of meetings in order to find out about funding opportunities. “We [Latinos] are absent in the meetings. When they [funders] divide up the funds, they don’t think of Latinos and frequently the money is gone. We need to be at the table to give our opinions and to be there when they make the plans for accessing services” (interview August 8, 2007). Josue’s response demonstrates that due to the lack of interest from public officials or agency heads in incorporating the new residents into the community, it is up to leaders of community organizations to call attention to the critical needs of their constituents.

The receiving context is important in shaping the role of nonprofits serving the growing Latino community. As Latino immigrants become more visible in Central Ohio, their presence is rejected by the larger society, resulting in tension and an uneven reception. In Central Ohio, there is recognition of the contribution Latino immigrants are making to the labor force, but there is very little interest in establishing a welcoming context or facilitating their integration into the community. The nonprofits, therefore, have to take on the responsibility of articulating the rights and concerns of the newest members of the community. In the next section, I will discuss the role of the nonprofit sector in society and the restrictions that it operates under.

## **Chapter 2. The Nonprofit Sector: Successes and Challenges**

The nonprofit sector is a large and growing sector in the United States. There are more than one million organizations designated as 501(c) 3 tax-exempt charitable organizations across the United States (Cohen 2005). These organizations combined represent 6 percent of the national income, and employ over 9 percent of the labor force (excluding volunteers) (Boris 2006). Not only is the sector a large employer, nonprofit organizations in the United States have assets of approximately \$3 trillion and expenses of \$1.3 trillion (Boris 2006). In Central Ohio, the sector is a strong part of the state's economy, and in 2003, there were 1,514 nonprofits that filed reports with the IRS (as required for organizations that have more than \$25,000 in annual gross receipts) (Malecki et al 2005). In 2003, nonprofits employed 60,390 people, slightly below the 60,499 employed in leisure and hospitality establishments, the third-largest employer in the county (Malecki et al 2005).

Political scientist Elizabeth Boris has documented the tremendous growth in the sector in recent years. According to her research, the total number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS as 501 (c) 3s more than doubled between 1989 and 2004 (2006). In this time period, small organizations with revenues between \$5,000 and \$25,000 grew most rapidly. In 2004, these organizations made up about 62 percent of the diverse 501 (c) 3s (2006). Of all the 501 (c) 3s, human service organizations increased by 119 percent in this time period (2006).

It is important to make clear what types of nonprofit organizations have grown recently, because there is an incredible diversity within the nonprofit sector. Organizations vary in size and in their missions. The term nonprofit is used to describe a

lot of different types of organizations and not all organizations in the sector are small, community based, charitable organizations. There are 26 types of tax-exempt organizations defined by the government ranging from private social service organizations, health clinics and private hospitals, environmental groups and research institutes, after-school groups and private universities, art museums, community development groups, labor unions, political parties, social clubs and many more (Salamon and Anheier 1996). The focus of this research is on nonprofit organizations classified by the IRS tax code as 501(c) 3 organizations. Even within the 501 (c) 3 category, there is a broad spectrum of organizations: museums, historical societies, private schools and PTAs, humane societies, environmental groups, nonprofit hospitals, health related organizations, homeless shelters, food banks, international aid organizations, and civil rights groups to name a few.

In order to be considered a 501 (c) 3 organization, the group must have a board of directors and be self-governing, be formally constituted (filed papers of incorporation with a state office) and cannot distribute profits to those who control it. Confirmation of 501 (c) 3 status is granted by the IRS based upon a review of the organization's bylaws and statement of purpose; and it is a pretty routine granting of status (Salamon and Anheier 1996). All nonprofits with annual gross receipts of \$5,000 or more (except religious groups) are required to register with the IRS. Organizations with annual revenues of more than \$25,000 have to file IRS form 990, a public document which indicates the organization's lobbying expenses (permitted to be up to approximately 20 percent of its total expenses). 501 (c) 3 organizations are exempt from most taxes on their own income, and also eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions. Tax-

deductible contributions are a very important incentive used by the organizations to encourage contributions from private donors.

Although there is a wide range of nonprofits from small organizations with limited resources that operate in a small community mostly with volunteers, to large, national organizations with well-paid professional staff and millions of dollars in expenditures, most nonprofit organizations are community-based, have a modest amount of resources, and are familiar only to the people in the place where they provide services. Nonprofit organizations are recognized as an important part of our democratic system and have been effective agents for positive changes in the past. They have strengthened communities and played an important role in advocating for vulnerable populations from children to the homeless. Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union have challenged unjust policies and fought to preserve basic rights of community members. As nonprofit scholar Pablo Eisenberg writes of a place without strong nonprofits, in such places “communities cannot apply pressure on government and the political leadership for equitable services, resources, and treatment. And so they become second-class areas, the residual repositories of voiceless and powerless people, the tinderboxes from which explosions can be expected tomorrow and twenty years from now” (Eisenberg 2004 118).

Throughout history, and in a myriad of ways, the nonprofit sector has been a force for social change. Nonprofit organizations have been important players in various progressive movements fighting for the advancement of civil rights. As political scientist Elizabeth Boris states, “Some of the most profound social changes of this century have been promoted through a combination of research, public education, advocacy, legislation, and litigation fostered by nonprofit organizations” (2006, 21). From large,

national organizations like the American Legion fighting for the passage of the GI Bill or environmental organizations using research, public education, advocacy and litigation to reduce pollution and to protect wildlife, to the smaller victories in communities throughout the United States, such as a day-laborer support organization establishing a publicly supported center for workers in Maryland; nonprofits have demonstrated the ability to bring about positive change. In the case of immigrants, Eisenberg states that at the end of the 1800s, urban immigrants formed the International Institute to advocate for their rights and more economic opportunities (2004, 141). More recently, during the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), nonprofits were influential in shaping how the sweeping policy was implemented (Hagan and Gonzalez Baker 1993).

### *Nonprofit organizations and Government Financing*

The literature on nonprofit organizations has focused on their role as social service providers; however, there is growing recognition of their relationship with the government and their impact on public policy. “In various contexts, nonprofits have served as privately supported supplementary service providers of public goods, as complementary partners with government in public service provision, and as advocates and adversaries in the process of public policy formulation and implementation. Often, two or three of these roles are manifested simultaneously” (Young 2006, 38). Over time there has been a significant change in the relationship between the government and nonprofit organizations. As political scientist Steven R. Smith explains in a history of public funding to nonprofits, government support of nonprofits has a long history in the



United States. For example, Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital both received federal support in their early years (Smith 2006, 220). During the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government began transforming the way welfare benefits were distributed and began subcontracting social service provision to local nonprofits. In the 1960s, there was a significant increase in the level of public funds going to nonprofits because of extensive federal spending on multiple new social programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, community mental health centers, neighborhood health clinics, community action agencies and child protection programs (Smith 2006, 221). In the 1970s, “government funding essentially created a national network of mostly nonprofit drug and alcohol treatment programs” as well as supporting battered women’s shelters, rape crisis programs and shelters for runaway youth (Smith 2006, 221). Federal funding continued to flow to nonprofit agencies through the 1980s, as the government responded to AIDS, homelessness, and hunger through contracts with nonprofits (Smith 2006, 221). During the 1980s, the federal government sought to reduce costs and pass on responsibilities to the local level through devolution (Smith 2006, De Vita and Twombly 2006, Berry and Arons 2003, de Graauw 2008). In 1996, during the period of welfare reform, federal funding for cash payouts to individuals decreased dramatically, but federal support of nonprofits increased sharply. Overall, the amount of federal spending on human services rose as a result of federal welfare reform, as support for nonprofits’ work in day care, job training and counseling was increased (Smith 2006). As nonprofit scholars explain, “the devolution of social programs, fueled by the movement toward block grants and the political pressure to keep government bureaucracies small, has pulled nonprofits closer into the web of government” (Berry and Arons 2003, 23). This change presents various

challenges to nonprofits. First, government decisions affect the level of resources available to nonprofits since government programs have become a significant source of nonprofit revenue (Abramson, Salamon and Steuerle 2006). Thus, nonprofits are much more hesitant to criticize the government agencies that provide substantial portions of their funding. Programs may be constrained and clients may be left out by certain restrictions on a grant, but the organizations may not feel they are able to raise their concerns at the risk of losing a contract or grant. Additionally, organizations that receive government funding are in the difficult position that if they advocate for certain programs and positions while they receive state funding, “they are the *de facto* state representatives and agencies in their communities. From the perspective of clients, they are receiving state-entitled services through the [organization], and therefore sometimes the line between ‘the organization’ and the ‘the state’ is blurred in practice” (Cordero-Guzman 2005, 907).

### *Restrictions on Nonprofit Advocacy*

While there are many examples of nonprofit organizations advocating for various policies throughout history, the literature has mostly viewed nonprofits as social service providers who are politically inactive. There are various reasons why nonprofits are constrained and unable to speak on behalf of their clients. A major factor that explains the lack of advocacy by some nonprofits is the various restrictions put on them by the government. In exchange for the tax-exempt status, nonprofit organizations are prohibited from conducting various types of legislative lobbying. Organizations are allowed to conduct nonpartisan voter registration, voter education candidate forums and

candidate information sessions, and get out the vote activities. They are also allowed to conduct nonpartisan issue advocacy, however, there is outright prohibition of partisan campaign intervention, including endorsing or opposing a candidate; coordination of activities with a candidate, contributing money, time, or facilities to a candidate (Reid 2006).

Organizations that file an IRS form 990 are prohibited from spending a “substantial” amount of their expenses on the permissible lobbying activities. Currently, the ‘substantial’ amount is anything over twenty percent of their annual expenditures. The IRS defines the lobbying expenditures narrowly as “expenditures on direct or grassroots contact with elected officials on specific legislation or judicial appointments, and levies financial penalties on organizations that surpass the expenditure limits” (Reid 2006, 354).<sup>4</sup> Organizations that violate the restrictions may not only face fines, but also possible revocation of their tax-exempt status. Unlike labor unions and other interest groups, 501 (c) 3 organizations are unable to persuade public officials with a blend of votes, campaign contributions, and information.

Multiple scholars have written on the limitations of political activity placed on nonprofits. A view commonly expressed is that nonprofit organizations face lobbying restrictions because the government does not want charitable donations which are tax exempt to be diverted to partisan purposes, or put another way, limitations on lobbying

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<sup>4</sup> Since 1990 when the IRS published final regulations to a 1976 law, nonprofit organizations can elect to file a separate form, “the H election,” which generally allows section 501(c)(3) organizations to elect to have the question of whether they are engaging in too much lobbying decided on the basis of how much money they spend on lobbying. A formula was created that clarifies that the total lobbying limits are set at 20 percent for the first \$500,000 of exempt-purpose expenditures for organizations that make the 501 (h) election. After 20 percent of the first \$500,000 lobbying limits are then calculated on a sliding scale based on total exempt-purpose expenditures up to a cap of \$1 million for total lobbying expenditures (Reid 2006, 368).

by nonprofits can be seen as “an attempt by the ‘public sovereign’ to tell the other that ‘your boundaries will be respected as long as you stay on your side of the line’” (Brody and Cordes 2006, 155).

Nonprofit organizations are charged with feeding the poor and treating the sick, but are restricted in speaking out about the causes of poverty or the problems with the healthcare system. Conflict occurs when the government and nonprofits have different views of where the lines are between permissible acts of nonpartisan policy advocacy and engagement in political intervention. For example, large nonprofits such as the NAACP and other social justice, environmental and advocacy organizations have complained that they have been victims of government harassment both at the state and local levels because of positions they have taken on issues. During the 2004 election, more than 100 organizations were investigated for possible violations of electioneering restrictions. The CEO of the NAACP gave a speech criticizing President Bush during the 2004 campaign, which the IRS later cited as a violation of its tax-exempt status and the IRS launched an investigation. Although the NAACP was not fined, the investigation resulted in little clarification or precedent for nonprofit organizations (Reid 2006, Young 2006, Brody and Cordes 2006).<sup>5</sup> Although the boundaries between public education and political activity are not clear, the Supreme Court case *Reagan v Taxation with Representation* of 1983 upheld the lobbying restrictions against a First Amendment challenge citing the ability of organizations to establish social welfare affiliates which are exempt from most lobbying

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<sup>5</sup> In another example of political action to limit nonprofit lobbying, conservative House members persuaded sponsors of a federal housing bill to add provisions that would bar organizations that lobby or engage in nonpartisan election-related activities from applying for grants from a newly established fund (Reid 356).

restrictions under section 501 (c) 4 of the tax code in order to conduct lobbying (Brody and Cordes 2006, Reid 2006)<sup>6</sup>. Given the uncertainty surrounding the permissibility of lobbying and the consequences for violating the restrictions, it is perhaps not surprising that very few organizations have the institutional capacity level that they can report lobbying activities. The percentage of organizations that report lobbying expenditures has been consistently about two percent of nonprofits for the past ten years (Reid 2006, Suarez and Hwang 2008). Of the organizations that report, civil rights and environmental organizations with significant resources are most prevalent (Reid 2006). One explanation for the number of civil rights organizations that lobby is that it is closely tied to their mission. Lobbying can be seen as “part of their identity as representatives for communities with little voice in policy... they are activist organizations dedicated to improving the world for their clients while also questioning and challenging the conditions that their clients encounter” (Suárez and Hwang 2008, 99). Few other types of organizations lobby and of those that do, most do not spend up to the limit allowed. Nonprofit leaders “question whether the subsidy rationale has had the unintended consequence of further suppressing engagement in a democracy that espouses popular expression and action as a centerpiece of legitimate government” (Reid 2006, 354). Executives of nonprofits have stated that they view the restrictions as harassment for criticizing government policies, while others view them as complex and a barrier to any

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<sup>6</sup> Organizations can choose to be structured with multiple tax-exempt entities such as combining a 501c 3 charity with a 501 c 4-6 lobbying arm, and establishing a PAC and a 527 organization. An example is the Sierra Club: Its foundation is a charitable, educational arm, and there is also the Sierra Club PAC for political contributions, and the Sierra Club Voter Education Fund is a 527 organization that conducts electioneering activities (Reid 362).

attempt to do advocacy work (Reid 2006, Berry and Arons 2003). At the same time that the restrictions have been enforced by the IRS investigations, the government is increasing its reliance on the nonprofit sector to deliver social services through the faith based initiative and raising the responsibilities of nonprofits in response to natural disasters (Reid 2006). The increasing dependence on government funds and contracts has reduced advocacy efforts by nonprofit organizations, as they find it difficult to criticize the source of their funding (Eisenberg 2004). Additionally, for many nonprofit executives, the threat of losing their tax-deductible status is too great to risk by giving even the slightest appearance of political lobbying.

Financial decisions play a role in the reluctance by nonprofit leaders to conduct advocacy activities. Foundations and corporate donors also restrict their giving to nonprofits; Eisenberg notes that he has heard from multiple executive directors that they were told by their funders not to engage in advocacy if they wanted to obtain or continue to obtain funding (2004). For many nonprofits, trying to sustain the organization is a priority and they do not have the capacity to engage in advocacy efforts. With their priorities focused on meeting critical needs, and fearing the possibility of angering their funders, and in many cases lacking information about public policy (Eisenberg 2004), nonprofits today face many challenges that can prevent them from conducting advocacy.

Despite the restrictions placed on them and the low levels of legislative lobbying reported, nonprofits have demonstrated that they are able to voice the concerns of their clients and influence public policy. Some scholars argue that because of the restrictions, nonprofits have had to distinguish themselves from other political interest groups by creating strategic ways to advance their interests (Reid 2006, de Graauw 2008). The

restrictions on nonprofit lobbying do not limit the production of educational position papers and other publications to inform policymakers and constituents (Brody and Cordes 2006). “Nonprofits try to educate the public and encourage individuals to contact their representatives directly or to sign petitions for or against certain positions; they promote voter registration and inform voters... some nonprofits also try to influence public policy through demonstrations, sit-ins, parades, and boycotts” (Boris 2006, 21). For example, in 2004, the Center for Community Change partnered with 53 organizations in 26 states to launch the Community Voting Project; an initiative that provided information on political issues and encouraged voter turnout (Reid 2006). Many small organizations with limited capacity to launch policy campaigns form coalitions to coordinate limited resources (Reid 2006). Other strategies used by organizations are contacting the administrative branch and agencies directly about policy implementation because that is not restricted and does not constitute lobbying under the tax rules (de Graauw 2008, Brody and Cordes 2006). For example, an organization may contact the city agency that funds a program the organization runs about an implementation issue. The organization is shaping policy and working with the political system to benefit its clients, however, the organization staff does not consider it “lobbying” or even advocacy. In some of the studies that have been done on nonprofits and lobbying, researchers have changed their interview questions to define lobbying very broadly in order to capture the range of administrative contact nonprofits engage in (Berry and Arons 2003). Additionally, nonprofits that receive grants from the city to administer programs are able to take advantage of the relationships with the funding agencies to educate administrators about the populations they serve. Larger organizations, like the Sierra Club, have various options to conduct advocacy,

such as public interest litigation, forming social welfare organizations (501 c 4s), and many organizations can use their board members to lobby on their behalf (Reid 2006, Chung 2005).

### *Immigrant-serving Nonprofits*

Within this larger context of nonprofits and the challenges they face in taking part in shaping public policy, there are cases that demonstrate the political advocacy being undertaken by immigrant-serving nonprofits in a few cities across the United States. Immigrants are not a natural constituency for anyone since they are unable to vote and are newcomers in the community. Yet, there are concerns unique to the foreign-born that are often unmet. Immigrant-serving nonprofits can speak for this population and can play a role in the incorporation of immigrants into the community. Several scholars have emphasized the role of nonprofit organizations in the social, economic, and political incorporation of immigrants.<sup>7</sup> As sociologist Els de Graauw states of her research in San Francisco, “nonprofits bridge the gap between the ‘powerless’ immigrant community and the ‘powerful’ members of the San Francisco political establishment” (2007, 3). Immigrant-serving nonprofits are able to not only play a critical role in meeting the social service needs of the immigrant community, but they are also able to voice the concerns of these groups. Research has demonstrated that the level of involvement of American civic institutions with immigrant communities affects the level of political participation by

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<sup>7</sup> See Bloemraad, Irene (2005), Cantor, Guillermo (2008), Cordero-Guzman, Hector (2005), Cortes, Michael (1998), Garcia, John and de la Garza, Rodolfo (1985), Hutcheson, John and Dominguez, Lino (1986), Koldewyn, Phillip (1992), Minkoff, Debra (2002), Schrover, Marlou and Vermeulen, Floris 2005.



members of those communities (Wong 2006, 3; Bloemraad 2003). What is new, however, is the central role that these organizations take in the process (Wong 2006, de Graauw 2008).

Immigrant-serving nonprofits have been defined as organizations “formed by individuals who are members of a particular ethnic or national-origin group, for the purpose of providing social services primarily to immigrants from the same ethnic or national group” (Cordero-Guzman 2005, 894). These organizations have also been called “ethnic” nonprofits and defined as “nongovernmental associations established by and for [a particular ethnic group] for the specific purpose of delivering services— social, economic, and cultural— or acting as advocates on behalf of community (Rodriguez-Fraticelli in Chung 2005, 916).

Research is just beginning on these organizations. In a sample of immigrant organizations in various metropolitan cities, as well as in another sample in New York City, it was clear that immigrant nonprofits are young organizations; the vast majority formed in the past twenty years (Hung 2007, Cordero-Guzman 2005). These organizations have filled a void that in the past had been filled by political parties. According to political scientist, Janelle Wong, 19<sup>th</sup> Century immigrants from Europe arrived in the United States to find “important political groups eager to satisfy their material needs” (2006, 3). Today’s immigrants, however, are marginalized from the political system. Political parties are not as active in recruiting today’s immigrants (Wong 2006).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Political parties are no longer the locally based organizations that they once were. Instead, the parties are now centralized in Washington, D.C. and efforts stem from their headquarters. There

In his history of immigrant associations throughout the world, Jose Moya, explains that the organizations are not distinct to certain ethnic groups or receiving societies, instead they are stimulated by the act of migrating, which strengthens collective identities (2005). This argument is supported by the claim that the organizations are formed to “create, express and maintain a collective identity” (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005, 824). Additionally, the organizations are formed not only to express a collective identity by people who are settling in a new community; they are also formed because of a collective action by a group of people who share the same local public interests or who share social service needs (Hung 2007, Cordero-Guzman 2005). In his research on immigrant-serving organizations in New York, Hector Cordero-Guzman finds that:

As new immigrant communities are established and grow, their families and children receive services from existing social-service agencies, which may or may not be run by members of their own ethnic or national-origin groups. But, over time, immigrant groups face both internal community pressures and external pressure for representation that lead them to begin to form ‘their own’ organizations (2005, 894).

The rationale for the formation of these organizations is two-fold: to address economic survival and to maintain a cultural identity (Hung 2007).

Despite facing restrictions on their activities, immigrant-serving organizations represent their constituents; however these organizations are different from other political interest groups in many ways. Immigrant-serving organizations have the trust of their clients. This trust is earned by providing critical services such as English classes, access to healthcare, and other culturally relevant information. Frequently, immigrant-serving

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is an absence of strong local-level political activity (Wong 2006 3). See also Andersen and Wintringham (2003) on the lack of engagement by political parties.

nonprofits are composed of staff who share familial ties or other traits with the community members they serve (Wong 2006). These organizations differ from other social service providers in that they “explicitly incorporate cultural components, and a consciousness of ethnic or national-origin identity, into their mission, practices, services and programs” (Cordero-Guzman 2005, 894). For example, the Asociacion Tepeyac in New York demonstrates a cultural element from the name of the organization to the various special events they organize throughout the year. These differences from other social service organizations can help immigrant nonprofits represent their constituents.

Immigrant-serving nonprofits have been identified as social service providers who are also advocating for their clients before local policymakers. As social service providers and as a critical resource for immigrants, these organizations are able to identify issues of particular interest to the immigrant community. “Organizations provide a form of what can be called ‘social capital’ in terms of a set of resources, knowledge, services and information and are central to the reconstitution, formation and management of immigrant social, political, and economic networks” (Cordero-Guzman 2005, 906). For example, in San Francisco, a group of immigrant-serving nonprofits worked together for the passage of the Equal Access to Services Ordinance, mandating that city services have to be provided in a variety of languages. de Graauw describes the critical effort put forth by immigrant-serving organizations, “they identified the need for EASO, put the policy on the city’s legislative agenda, drafted the text of the law, advocated for its passage, [and] monitored the implementation of the ordinance since its enactment in 2001” (de Graauw 2008, 183).

These organizations are uniquely poised to speak on behalf of immigrants and can also offer to disseminate information to the community on behalf of policymakers. By claiming to represent a large number of people, a community organization can increase its influence and policymaking power (Wong 2006, de Graauw 2007). In cities with large immigrant populations, lawmakers recognize that immigrants are part of the community; their children attend schools, they are part of the local workforce, operate small businesses, pay taxes, and bring vitality to depressed areas. In San Francisco, local legislators are overwhelmed by various interest groups representing disparate causes and have only two legislative aides each to help them; therefore, they “gladly avail themselves of nonprofits’ expertise on the immigrant community to enable them to develop policies that better serve the city’s diverse population” (de Graauw 2008, 189). Immigrant nonprofit leaders explain that their political activities are not lobbying, they are educating policymakers (de Graauw 2008). The immigrant-serving nonprofits fill a void in communication between the government and immigrant communities and they “are able to effectively convey information to the top levels of local government because they have strong roots in the local community and are well-positioned to learn about immigrants’ changing needs and concerns” (de Graauw 2007, 24). Governments can work with the organizations to address communities that can be difficult to reach. In an example of a Brazilian immigrant organization in a Japanese city, local officials realized the value of the organization as a link to the Brazilian community and worked with the organization to share information about garbage disposal, recycling, disaster management plans, and other municipal works (Yamanaka 2006).

In order to draw attention to important issues, immigrant-serving nonprofits frequently work in coalitions. Many of the organizations are small and do not have the resources to launch a campaign on their own. Therefore, they have established networks that have taken shape over time and have demonstrated that they are able to produce effective protests. For example, the Center for Community Change has launched the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, comprised of hundreds of organizations with roots in communities across the country to demonstrate for comprehensive immigration reform. In 2006, the coalition was able to engage groups across the country in protests against an immigration bill through their network (FIRM website). Working together also allows immigrant-serving organizations the freedom to engage in campaigns without drawing attention to the individual organizations and risk being seen as too engaged in political activities. Sometimes, their work is not directed at legislators directly, instead they organize public events in order to indirectly win support for their issue. For example, the Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan in New York City, is part of the Queens Coalition for Drivers' Licenses, and participated in a march in early 2005 to press for the issuance of drivers' licenses without having to show a social security number. This is an important strategy for immigrant-serving organizations to mobilize their constituents since many of them may be undocumented, and therefore, ineligible to vote (Wong 2006). In the various campaigns that immigrant-serving nonprofits participated in, the campaigns used the "language of human rights, support for the expansion of civic and political rights to migrants, the contributions of immigrants to the economy and society and the desire to keep families united" (Cordero-Guzman et al, 2007, 20). By raising their voices

collectively, immigrant-serving nonprofits bring to the forefront concerns of the disenfranchised and marginalized members of communities.

### **Chapter 3. Central Ohio Immigrant-Serving Nonprofits and Advocacy**

In order to appreciate what is happening on the ground in Central Ohio in terms of the development of the Latino community, it is helpful to consider the concept of cultural citizenship. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo introduced the term cultural citizenship and then developed the concept further with scholars in a working group. Cultural citizenship is useful in examining the Latino community in Columbus because it is a way of looking at activities and norms of daily life as creating a social space “which is evolving and developing new forms, many of them contributing to an emergent Latino consciousness and social and political development” (Flores and Benmayor 1997, i).

There are signs of political development among the immigrant-serving nonprofits in Central Ohio. These organizations in Columbus are bringing attention to important issues Latinos face, and raising concerns for a marginalized population. The development of these organizations is critical to the incorporation of the growing Latino community and their success will impact how future immigrants are received. As scholar Ramon Borges Mendez states, “The emergence of advocacy political activity directed to the problems immigrants face in their communities represents the fruition of a subtle process of maturation of community leadership and organizational capacity” (Borges-Mendez 2007, 244). At this point, the Latino community in Central Ohio is still very young, but there is ample evidence that it is forming a community that is in the process of defining “its interests, its binding solidarities, its boundaries, its own space, and its membership” which will lead to its affirmation of belonging in Columbus (Silvestrini 1997, 44).

Claiming space is an important aspect of cultural citizenship. Establishing

networks, services, restaurants, stores, and cultural events demonstrate a community's right to be distinct and to belong to the larger society (Rocco 1997). In Columbus, Latinos are claiming geographic and cultural spaces on the west side of the city. They have established a community that continues to draw more migrants. Demographers Heather Smith and Owen Furuseth explain that once a community is established, "Spanish language signage advertising vacant apartments, grocery stores, restaurants, laundromats and other necessary services for daily life become important factors drawing migrants to particular neighborhoods over others" (Smith and Furuseth 2006, 26).

As in other small cities where Latinos have settled, they are concentrated in certain neighborhoods where real estate was not valuable and have remained there for some time allowing for the formation of organizations. As scholar Borges Mendez explains, " 'staying in place,' preserving the spatial integrity of the initial *colonias* and of to-be *barrios*, has been critical to spinning several territorially-based, as well as cultural, organizations" (2007, 237). Borges Mendez contrasts small cities with Latino populations such as Lawrence, Massachusetts to larger cities such as New York or Boston, "where the forces of urban renewal, gentrification and displacement unleashed by restructuring have kept the base of the Latino community 'moving' from neighborhood to neighborhood and without the possibility of consolidating social capital and political power" (2007, 240).

In order to observe the social capital of the Latino community in Columbus, I contacted three social service organizations in Central Ohio to explore what services they provide to the Latino community and if there were signs of these social service providers conducting advocacy. Similar to other cities, established Latinos in Columbus became



aware of the community's social service needs, therefore, they formed organizations (Cordero-Guzman 2005). For example, in Columbus the Latino community was aware of the critical gaps in healthcare services for the rapidly growing Latino immigrant population, and formed the Ohio Hispanic Coalition (OHC). Likewise, the Job Readiness Program and the Latino Empowerment Opportunity Network (LEON) were created to fill gaps in services to the growing numbers of Latino immigrants. In the following section I discuss three primary service organizations: the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, the Job Readiness Program and the Latino Empowerment Outreach Network.

### *The Ohio Hispanic Coalition*

The Ohio Hispanic Coalition (OHC) was formed in the early 1990s in order to address the critical needs of the recently arrived Latino immigrants, which were being ignored by the receiving community. Josue Vicente, the current Executive Director, explained that the organization was formed when a Spanish-speaking pregnant woman living in Columbus was denied healthcare at a local emergency room. As a result of this incident, a group of women got together and started the organization. According to a brochure from the organization, the OHC became Columbus' first Latino agency serving the needs of the new immigrant Hispanic community. It became a 501(c) 3 organization in 1996 and "Since then is vigilant to ensure the rights of our Hispanic community are not violated" (OHC brochure). The organization's mission is: "To improve the well-being and quality of life of Hispanics through advocacy, education, training and access to quality services" (OHC website). The OHC has grown over time and has nearly \$950,000 in annual revenue (IRS 990 form 2006). The OHC is made up of a staff of 17 employees and 45 contractors who are all Spanish-English bilingual and from various

countries of origin. The Executive Director emigrated from Mexico in the 1990s and the organization is also represented by a President, Julia Arbin Carbonell of Colombian descent, and a Chairman of the Board of Directors, Joseph Mas, who immigrated to the United States from Cuba and later settled in Columbus. The organization focuses on providing health services (through a mobile clinic and many types of health screenings) as well as interpretation and translation services, English classes for adults, and after school programs. The OHC reports that it serves over 400 walk-ins and answers over 4,000 phone calls per month on average. It conducts a lot of its work through partnerships with other organizations that provide services to their clients.

While I was in Columbus, I attended five events organized by the OHC — a back to school fair where they conducted health screenings for the children and their parents and gave away school supplies; a health fair; a safety clinic where they gave away infant car seats and demonstrated how to use them properly; a monthly networking meeting; and an informational meeting about voting sponsored by a local campaign group supporting presidential candidate, Barack Obama. These events had different purposes and different audiences. The fairs were organized to provide a wide variety of social services to the community, while the monthly network meeting is intended to have social service providers share information about services and ways to collaborate and serve the Latino community (presenters included an officer from the Columbus Police Department, a mental health advocate, and an attorney who was offering his legal services). The campaign event was a result of the Obama supporters contacting Josue about a way to reach out to the Latino community and introduce the candidate. The meeting was also intended to disseminate information to the Latino community about voting eligibility and

the process of voting on Election Day. In addition to these events, the OHC organizes a Three King's Day party for families as well as other cultural activities throughout the year to maintain and foster their clients' sense of cultural pride.

As the largest Latino serving organization and the most visible, the OHC has the most potential for advocacy and organizing. It has a good rapport with the clients that it serves, and according to Josue, positive word of mouth helps them to promote their programs (interview August 8, 2007). Since they have established a relationship with Latino immigrants in Columbus, there is a foundation for organizing and putting pressure on policymakers as representatives of the community. Additionally, the OHC is reaching out to policymakers and growing those relationships by inviting them to their events such as the Three King's Day party. However, there is a lot more that the organization can do to increase its influence and become more politically involved. The organization's staff members are not asked to attend community meetings and the Chairman of the Board, Joseph Mas, stated that he does not expect staff members to participate in political activities. When he described his opposition to the U.S. Border Patrol recruiting through a job fair in Columbus and his desire to demonstrate against the job fair, he stated, "We don't ask people from the Coalition to come and do anything. The employees are employees, they don't... we never ask them to become involved in that. Officially or unofficially" (interview December 20, 2007).

#### *Job Readiness Program*

The second organization that I contacted is the Job Readiness Program of Catholic Social Services. Although the program is organized under the auspices of Catholic Social Services, clients do not have to belong to the Catholic Church and currently, the program

is 100 percent funded by Franklin County Child and Family Services. I spoke with one of the instructors in the program who is bilingual and of Puerto Rican descent, as well as the program director who immigrated in 2004 to Columbus from Argentina.

The goal of the program is to connect Central Ohio Latinos with employers. Participants in the program receive various types of training and then work with job counselors to find and maintain employment. The organization has had much success and one of the local employers now advertises for workers in the Spanish-language newspapers by telling potential applicants to contact the job readiness program directly. Like the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, the Job Readiness Program provides culturally relevant services and is staffed by Latinos, thereby establishing a link with Latino immigrants.

The Job Readiness Program, however, does not appear to be politically active at this time. When a grant from a private foundation was not renewed and the program became dependent on municipal funds, it faced a serious problem. The grant from Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services mandates that beneficiaries must have a child under 18 years old living in their household in order to participate. The program thus misses a large segment of the Latino immigrant population in Columbus that it had previously been able to serve with private funds. The Job Readiness Program sees that the restriction limits its services, but it has not raised the issue with the agency. It is unclear what the agency would do if there were local budget cuts and the agency funding would be reduced or cut. In contrast, when a nonprofit working with Chinese immigrants in San Francisco received a \$300,000 grant from a city agency, the nonprofit recognized that the funds were not sufficient to meet the demand for their services, and the executive director went before the city council to appeal for more funds (de Graauw

2007). The agency director “brought along clients and staff to provide testimony on behalf of the organization, and succeeded in securing an additional \$200,000 from the city’s General Fund” (de Graauw 2007, 20). When I asked the director of the program in Columbus, Maria de Gregorio, about any activism or any activities to support immigrants locally, she responded that the program leaves that to the larger Catholic advocacy organizations like Catholic Charities and referenced the Justice for Immigrants campaign (interview August 13, 2007). On the day of the immigrants’ rights marches in the spring of 2006, Maria said that the office was closed and she went to the march at the state capital, but later said that as an organization they were not able to participate, that she and the others from the office went as Latinos, but not as representatives of their organization (interview August 13, 2007). At this point, the program leaders are concerned principally with helping clients find steady employment and are not demonstrating signs of administrative lobbying for their clients.

#### *The Latino Empowerment Outreach Network*

The third organization is also a 501(c) 3 organization, the Latino Empowerment Outreach Network (LEON). Its mission is “to collaborate as a network of individuals and organizations to empower and enrich the Latino community in the areas of health, education, advocacy, and communication” (LEON website). The organization has approximately \$18,000 in total revenue and does not have paid staff. It is made up of professionals in different fields who voluntarily serve on various committees to sponsor events and to advance the wellbeing of the Latino community. For example, since 2004 they have produced an annual directory of services in Spanish to distribute to the community. The organization has various committees including an education, health,

and advocacy committee to tackle various issues. According to the organization's website, the goals of the advocacy committee are to highlight issues important to the Latino community and, "Get a sense of policymakers' and community members' positions on the issue; Facilitate collaboration among Latino organizations and get a sense of how different organizations and individuals will take a part in the process of pushing and implementing initiatives" (LEON website). An example of their events is a town hall meeting to discuss an anti-immigrant bill that was introduced in the Ohio legislature.

The chair of the advocacy committee, Florentina Staigers explained that the committee is going to focus on combating anti-immigrant sentiment. Although she did not explain steps the organization is going to take, she said this was the largest concern at the meeting and the attendees want to be more pro-active in addressing anti-immigrant sentiment. According to Florentina, the participants stated they feel like they are always on the defensive on this. The advocacy committee is also going to work on advancing a piece of legislation in Ohio to allow undocumented high school students to secure funding to attend college, as well as working towards drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants.

Based on my conversations with representatives of these three organizations serving Latino immigrants in Columbus, Ohio, it is evident that the Latino community leadership has the potential to advocate for the Latino community, but it is confronting various obstacles that it will need to overcome. There are still multiple issues that the community leaders say need to be addressed for the betterment of the Latino community in Columbus. For example, Josue stated that issues of harassment by the police are a

high priority for him (interview August 8, 2007). The Chair of LEON, Guadalupe Velasquez, stated that housing and education are the areas that are most pressing (interview August 14, 2007). Regarding service provision, Josue and Guadalupe feel that there have been improvements and progress made in health care access and health education, especially about diabetes (interviews August 8, 2007, August 14, 2007). Guadalupe stated that she thinks there have been some improvements on education issues, and explained that LEON has a consortium that it works with on concerns for English learners, but that the capacity to keep up with the growing need is not there (interview August 14, 2007).

In terms of the development of the Latino leadership in Central Ohio there are also some signs of progress. For example, these organizations have reached a level of visibility that they are seen as a vital link to a population that is difficult to reach. Florentina and Josue both explained that other agencies and organization are contacting them to share information with the Latino community (interviews August 8, 2007, December 27, 2007). Other nonprofits in Central Ohio want to reach out to the Latino community, but they don't know how to, so they are looking to these organizations for assistance.

Another sign of the development of the Latino leadership in Columbus is the number of individuals with access to political leaders who are natural allies to the immigrant community. In other cities with long histories of having received immigrants, it is not uncommon that leaders from immigrant-serving nonprofits run for political office themselves, such as San Francisco's City Administrator, Ed Lee and the city's Assessor-Recorder Phil Ting who used to work in a legal aid clinic with the Asian Pacific Islander

community (de Graauw 2008). These leaders are now critical supporters of immigrant-friendly city policies. While Columbus does not yet have elected Latino leaders with roots in the nonprofit community (although there are two Latinos serving on city councils in Central Ohio), the Chairman of the Board of the OHC, Joseph Mas, ran for a judicial post and is widely connected to various bureaucrats and local politicians. The President of the OHC, Julia Arbini Carbonell, is an appointee on the city's Community Relations Commission "so she has direct access to the city council or the mayor's office" (interview with Joseph Mas, December 19, 2007). Also, Guadalupe Velasquez works in the mayor's office. These connections to the city's political leaders demonstrate the potential for advocacy in the Latino community and networks that can be utilized for the advancement of the issues affecting the community. The Latino community is working to grow the connections to the political leadership by establishing a leadership program offered nationally by the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute. The program offered a seven-week training opportunity for 18 Latinos in Columbus who met at city hall and received information from various city leaders (Williams 2005)

There are various challenges that exist that currently constrain the efforts of organizations that serve Latino immigrants in Columbus. First, there is the issue of the relatively small size of the Latino community in Central Ohio. The community lacks the clout to result in political power. This is the obvious difference from the organizations that work in New York City, San Francisco or Los Angeles, where immigrants make up at least one third of the population and political leaders recognize the value of the organizations serving these communities. Unlike these cities, the community organizations in Columbus are not yet able to translate their knowledge and familiarity



with the Latino residents into a service for public officials and therefore, lack the power that immigrant-serving nonprofits in other cities have. Columbus is similar to a case study of Syracuse, where the foreign-born population has increased recently, but is still relatively small and not recognized by the political leaders (Andersen and Wintringham 2003). According to Florentina, the Latino community is not on the radar screens of the city's leadership. "It's an afterthought to include the Latino community" (interview December 27, 2007). Similarly, Maria believes that the Latino community in Columbus is not as organized as it is in other places like Miami or California where the population is larger and stronger (interview August 13, 2007).

Although the leaders of the organizations are well known to each other and some have connections to the city's political leaders, there is still an absence of visible leadership outside of the community. Josue stated that when he goes to meetings around the city, he is frequently the only Latino there (interview August 8, 2007). He feels that if he does not go to the meetings as a representative of the Latino community, they are ignored (interview August 8, 2007). Joseph Mas expressed frustration that there is no sign of new leadership in the Latino community. He said that he has been told by friends, "Joe, if you get hit by a truck, I don't see anybody taking the lead. What happens to the Latino community?" At the end of the day when I send out an email and I say we have a crisis happening in the community, the response is not there" (interview December 19, 2007).

It will take time for the Latino community in Columbus to establish strong leaders that are recognized by the city's public officials and for the public officials to recognize the contributions of the community. However, there is a nascent recognition within

Columbus about the importance of successfully incorporating immigrants into the city. A report on the city's immigrant population stated, "there is a need not only to improve services for the existing immigrant population, but also to be better prepared for the impacts of immigration in the future" (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005, ix).

Despite the strong anti-immigrant sentiment that is present in parts of Central Ohio, there are some signs of the municipal government taking a positive interest in the Latino community. According to Joseph Mas, "the government today, particularly city and county, recognizes that they have a Latino community, they recognize that there is, if not an extraordinary amount of political power, at the very least it's an issue. At least that there is a humanitarian issue involved..." (interview December 19, 2007). The mayor of Columbus established the "New American Initiative" in the Community Relations Commission to give immigrants and refugees in the city access to city services and programs. The initiative is charged with working with community organizations and service providers. Guadalupe Velasquez, the Chair of LEON is one of two coordinators of the initiative; the other coordinator works with the African immigrant community.

Also, Franklin County has invested some funds in immigrant-serving programs. According to a report commissioned by the county, funding for immigrant and refugee services in Franklin County totaled \$6.8 million in 2004 (Community Research Partners and CRIS 2005). Nearly 30 percent of the funding came from federal sources, 56 percent came from local public funding, and nearly 15 percent came from philanthropic sources (Community Research Partners 205, viii). Regarding the Latino community at the state level, the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, a state government agency based

in Columbus, received a tremendous budget increase that will be used to fund community projects among other plans. Ohio's fiscal year 2008 budget allocated more than \$700,000 to the agency, up from the previous year's allocation of only \$181,000 (Abrams 2007).

Although there is some positive recognition from the local and state government of the Latino community there are other challenges that the community must address. Compounding the problem of the lack of visible leadership in the Latino community, there is little cooperation within or with other immigrant-serving organizations. For example, both LEON and the OHC hold networking meetings where they offer community representatives from various organizations the opportunity to distribute information about their services to the Latino community. This overlap may confuse outsiders who may not know that there are two separate meetings or they may assume that the organizations share information, therefore a representative who presents at one meeting, may not attend the other group's networking meeting.

Another example of the communication problems is the lack of accurate contact information for people working with the Latino community. According to Florentina, the transience of the Latino community leadership is a barrier to strong communication. Phone numbers and emails are always changing. "I would call someone three months after getting their contact information, and it would have changed already" (interview December 27, 2007). It is distressing that the Chair of the Advocacy Committee of LEON cannot send out an email to a listserv of community members because one does not exist.

According to Guadalupe, communication problems resulted in stalled momentum after the immigrants' rights marches in spring of 2006. She explained that the demonstration at the state capital in the spring of 2006 was largely coordinated by people outside of Columbus, and those people did not include the city's Latino leaders in the planning, therefore, surprising some local Latino leaders (interview August 14, 2007).

Maria described the march downtown by saying:

Yes, there is a Hispanic presence but not to the extent that there could be. We are still behind compared to other states. The organizations don't work together. There is not unity. Yes, the intention is there to protest, but not as one community. There was one group here, one group over there. It lacks unity. It's not like it is in Florida where the groups are divided by country. That is not the way here because there aren't enough people. There isn't division by country (interview August 13, 2007).

There are also indications that the immigrant-serving organizations are not working together to advance their mutual causes. According to Florentina, LEON is looking for ways to work with other non-Latino immigrant groups, and invited representatives from the African immigrant organizations to the meeting they hosted on the anti-immigrant legislation. She believes that maybe only one person came. "We have to work on things we have in common and look at what unites us, instead of the divisions; issues like education, ESL, emergency and police response. They also face cultural differences and language barriers. For example, there is a problem in getting interpreters for domestic violence calls" (interview December 27, 2007). According to Josue, it is difficult to work with some of the other immigrant groups because they are mostly here with legal status, whereas, many in the Latino community are undocumented.

But he does see areas where they can work together as they did in the past with language access issues (interview August 8, 2007).

Finally, there are issues of institutional capacity that the organizations in Columbus face. At this point, the organizations have demonstrated success in delivering social services, but have yet to make the leap to “hybrid organizations” where they are able to provide critically needed services and affect policymaking at the same time (Minkoff 2002 and de Graauw 2007). For example, Florentina wanted LEON to host a press conference to raise awareness of the proposed anti-immigrant legislation, but the LEON communications committee did not think they would be able to organize it. Unfortunately, LEON did not look to partner with other organizations for assistance. There are opportunities for organizations to grow, however. In 2005, the Central Ohio funding community created the two year “Capacity Building Initiative: Immigrant and Refugee Organizations” in order to strengthen the organizations that serve newcomers. The Ohio Hispanic Coalition was selected to participate in the initiative and received financial support and training.

Despite these challenges, there are signs of political activity by the Latino immigrant-serving nonprofits in Columbus. One of the most visible signs of advocacy by the organizations came after a tragedy struck the Latino community in Columbus. In September 2004, an apartment fire on the west side of the city claimed the lives of 10 Latinos as well as injuring dozens of people and leaving 58 people homeless. As a result of the fire, multiple issues that had been ignored by city officials were brought to light. The tenants in the apartment building where the fire occurred were predominantly Mexican immigrants and in the days following the tragedy, they demonstrated their anger

at being disenfranchised and neglected. A community member observed, "There is a high level of frustration within the Mexican community as a result of this tragedy" (Futty 2004, 1A). The director of the state office on Latino affairs organized a community task force to address the issues raised by community members. He stated, "I think you have got a community that is moving from pain and sorrow to anger and resentment. So we want to be proactive about that and get a group of folks who can bridge those cultural and language gaps and work to restore confidence in our public-safety officials" (Andes and Mayhood 2004, 1A). LEON's advocacy committee has continued to work on the issues highlighted in the task force report. Although the recommendations of the task force were not all adopted, the tragedy resulted in the affirmation of the presence of a significant Latino community that could no longer be ignored. Franklin County Commissioner Mary Joy Kilroy toured the apartment building and stated, "Franklin County has a responsibility to reach out to immigrants. This tragedy has brought forward a lot of issues, a lot of anger, a lot of feeling that no one in government cares about them. There's 10 deaths here on one day, and it demands some sort of response from us" (Andes, Marx, and Mayhood 2004, 1A).

The LEON advocacy committee has made the emergency response issue one of their primary concerns. In February 2007, the advocacy committee hosted a meeting regarding access to the 911 emergency system for limited-English proficient callers. At the time, Franklin County did not have any system in place to handle calls from non-English speakers. According to Florentina, local policymakers were invited to the meeting and they were made aware of this need. She explained that a local legislator who attended the meeting believed that after the west side fires, the 911 response system

had already been improved to handle non-English speaking calls. Florentina and another member of the advocacy committee met with the Franklin County sheriff and the Franklin County administrator to discuss the issue. It was agreed that they would work toward having all Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) with responsibility for answering emergency calls contracting with an interpreting service to respond to non-English speaking callers. Weeks after this meeting, and after another tragedy in the Latino community, the gravity of the issue was understood by the Franklin County leaders, and they immediately subscribed to a language interpreting service. The county commissioners passed a resolution to have all PSAPs maintain a language interpreting service. The advocacy committee is maintaining pressure on public officials and has requested a follow up meeting with policymakers to address implementation issues regarding the interpreting services. The committee members want to discuss with the commissioners and county administrator data made available to the county from the interpreting service on the demand for the service (such as the number of calls that are handled monthly by the interpreting service) to determine if there is a need for additional access and perhaps the need for a bilingual dispatcher to be hired by the county. By creating an advocacy committee that pushes for and monitors the implementation of local policies, LEON is advancing the interests of the Latino community.

## Chapter 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nonprofit organizations do not become political actors overnight. It is a process that takes time and the development of leaders who can voice the concerns of the community. As an immigrant nonprofit leader in Columbus stated, “there are three things that are important in life: building economic, social and political development. If you have these, you can fight poverty and ignorance” (Pyle 2006). In order to establish themselves as political actors, organizations need to strengthen their organizational capacity so that they are not struggling to meet their missions of providing critical services, but they can also grow into organizations that are service providers and advocates.

Case studies of politically active immigrant-serving organizations demonstrate that it is vital to provide social spaces where people can engage in public actions and speech<sup>9</sup>. Immigrant-serving organizations can provide the space where the expression of collective claims can be organized, as in the case of the Barrio Popular Education Program in East Harlem, New York (Benmayor, Torruellas, Juarbe 1997) or the Mothers of East Los Angeles (Pardo, 1990). In these sites, organizations allow for their clients and program participants to connect the cultural space or network they have created to larger political issues such as access to education or to fight proposed undesirable civic projects in their neighborhoods.

There is a lot to learn about the ways that the Latino community is organizing and its future development. More research is needed on the ways that nonprofits are working

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<sup>9</sup> William Flores cites the definition of social space given by Sara Evans (1980) as an area where “members of an oppressed group can develop an independent sense of worth in contrast to their received definitions as second-class or inferior citizens” (1997, 241).



with the growing Latino community in Central Ohio. For example, additional data is necessary to learn of the ways that the Latino community is using the services provided by the nonprofits. A survey of Latino residents in Central Ohio aimed at identifying familiarity with services available and the usage of the services would reveal a lot about the demands of the community and the effectiveness of the organizations' outreach efforts to the community. Additionally, research is necessary to determine the extent to which local or state governments are financially supporting Latino nonprofits in Central Ohio. This information could be used to determine how the resources should be directed and how the resources can be used to increase organizational capacity. There is also a need to determine the effectiveness of nonprofit advocacy efforts in Columbus. In my observations, I noted the activities being undertaken by the immigrant-serving nonprofits, but the influence of these activities on policymakers needs to be examined.

Although more research is needed, it is possible from my observations to make some recommendations that could be implemented by the nonprofits working with the Latino community in Columbus. Collaboration among nonprofits serving Latinos as well as other immigrant groups in the area should be fostered. The Capacity Building Initiative organized by the Columbus Foundation provided a stepping-stone for future joint efforts. According to their interim assessment, the participating organizations reported that they wanted to continue to grow the partnerships that were established as a result of the initiative (Columbus Foundation 2006). There are many examples of organizations that have formed diverse coalitions in other cities that have advocated for the common interests of their clients.

In addition to working together, immigrant-serving nonprofits could benefit from training to learn how to be the most effective advocates. According to one nonprofit scholar, there are national organizations that work with nonprofits with the goal of “building strategic cooperation among potential allies; engaging organizational entrepreneurs with political networks; and developing sound policy information and dissemination strategies” (Reid 2006, 352). In Columbus, immigrant-serving nonprofits could use this type of training not only to become stronger representatives of the community, but they could also use the training to mount educational campaigns, which are desperately needed. As advocates, not only could the immigrant-serving nonprofits in Columbus articulate the needs of their clients and put pressure on policymakers to address those needs, but they could also educate the general public about the Latino community and its interests.

There is little information about immigrant-serving organizations, however, this is changing and there is some exciting work being done by scholars in various disciplines. By looking at the case studies that have been conducted in other cities, it is possible to see the opportunities that could develop in Columbus. My hope is that organizations working with the Latino community in Central Ohio will continue to develop into strong advocates for their clients. Many models of different types of nonprofits that advocate exist, and there are many examples of their policy successes. Labor scholar Janice Fine describes worker centers that not only resolve the wage disputes of individual low-wage immigrant workers, but they simultaneously mount political campaigns for comprehensive immigration reform and advocate for improved working conditions for all low-income workers. Through the work of these centers not only do their clients benefit,

but also communities as a whole improve. According to Fine, the worker centers have become established through “generational waves, as certain immigrant groups have reached a threshold level of settlement and organization, and workers and their allies have grappled with ways to negotiate with the larger society about the terms and conditions of work and the larger set of integration issues” (2006, 9). Latinos in Columbus have demonstrated that they are capable of demanding their rights and coming together to voice their concerns. By strengthening their institutional capacity and empowering their members to work in coalitions, immigrant-serving organizations will increase their clout and be recognized by policymakers as a valuable resource.

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