

Title: “CUANDO ACTUAMOS, ACTUAMOS JUNTOS”: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION, ACTIVISM, AND CITIZENSHIP WITHIN THE LATINO COMMUNITY IN INDIANAPOLIS

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Abstract:

Undocumented immigration from Latin America is a heated and divisive topic in United States' politics. Politicians in Washington, D.C. are debating new legislation which would provide a pathway to citizenship for some 11 million undocumented immigrants. While several federal immigration reform bills were debated in the early 2000s, each one failed in either the House of Representatives or in the Senate. The Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN), a grassroots activist group in Indianapolis, is organizing the Latino community through faith and shared political goals. Undocumented Latino immigrants are utilizing IndyCAN as a method to influence progressive policy change. However, anti-immigrant groups challenge these efforts by attempting to define who can be considered an "American" and are attempting to block legislation due to their negative perceptions of Latinos. Despite this, many Latino immigrants are forging their own identities in the United States and are engaging in a political system that refuses to grant them a legal status. Through an enactment of activism called *la fe en acción* [faith in action], these immigrants ground their political organizing in IndyCAN and appeal to the religious faith of politicians. I explore issues of race, political engagement, personal testimonies, and religion in the lives of Indianapolis' Latino community. I organized my research around the question: how does the transformative power of activism shape the experience of marginalized populations? In this case study, I demonstrate that IndyCAN is acting as a vehicle to engage undocumented Latino immigrants in the political process. This political involvement occurs through religious strategies that seem apolitical yet are implicitly an enactment of activism. Ultimately, I reveal how undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are impacting the political process regardless of their legal statuses.