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Organizing Immigrant Communities in American Cities: Is this Transnationalism, or What?

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“The political force of this organization lies in two principles: never abandon the friend,
and never lose contact with the enemy.”
**Adriana Fernández, *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*,
Houston, Texas, June 2002.**

“Organized money is power.”
**Teresa Fraga, *Pilsen Neighbors Community Council*,
Chicago, Illinois, May 2002.**

Introduction

The term “transnationalism” is now commonly used by a growing cluster of social scientists. However, some scholars assert that the term is hopeless: it generally ends up explaining nothing new, it seems to have no future, or even worse, its regular users seem not to agree on the definition of the term, and the debates that it generates generally takes social scientists nowhere.

This paper deals with this situation from two perspectives. Firstly, I point out the theoretical problems that “transnationalism” presents as an interdisciplinary concept. I identify different subjects and transnational fields of study in several disciplines (Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Law, Migration Studies, and Anthropology), and research fields (Communication, Gender, Religion), and expose how each discipline/research field has dealt with different issues while attempting to build a solid theoretical background of the broad term during the last twenty one years.

In theoretical terms, I argue that the use of the term “transnationalism” has been transformed to a point in which is practically impossible to sustain the broader sense of the term beyond its generic roots. Terms like political transnationalism, anthropological transnationalism, sociological transnationalism, etc., form a more feasible working frame if the term is to prevail in the neighborhood.

From an empirical perspective, I develop an analysis of political transnationalism based on the Mexican immigrant experience in Houston and Chicago. I expose an organizational approach of transnational politics, and lay emphasis on the role of the Mexican and American states in the process. I argue that the essence of transnational

politics is highly related to the agenda setting process of the organizations that deal with immigrant issues, and then I address the role of globalization politics and policies in the process of elite formation among immigrants. Finally, I point out the importance of the influence of local politics and policies in the formation and consolidation of transnational politics from an organizational standpoint.

The starting point of this analysis is a comparative study on political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston: *Órale Politics!*.¹ This research supports the argument that a complete understanding of immigrant political mobilization must simultaneously focus on the relations of Mexican immigrants with relevant political institutions and processes in their ‘home’ (in this case, Mexico) and ‘host’ societies (the United States).

Órale Politics! suggests that home state engagement with political mobilization in the host country has led to more, and not less political mobilization in the host country. This mobilization will vary significantly based on the context of reception, including the local and state level political institutions. For the purposes of this research, Mexican immigrants are those persons who were born in Mexico, who live in the United States, and who are noncitizens. Within the framework of nonelectoral politics, *Órale Politics!* focuses on mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants from an organizational standpoint, and considers organizations that deal with issues that are of the highest concern to Mexican immigrants.

Preliminary research for *Órale Politics!* was conducted in Chicago (neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, and Back of the Yards) and Houston (mainly Magnolia) in August and December 2000, and January 2001. Field research was then conducted between February and July 2002, mostly in Houston and Chicago. A total of 144 formal interviews were performed between December 2000 and July 2002, and more than 25 events (public demonstrations, workshops, conferences, organizational meetings, masses, etc.) were observed.

Interviewees for *Órale Politics!* include leaders, activists, organizers, chairmen, and priests within a wide range of organizational backgrounds: community-based

¹ *Órale Politics!* is a research that addresses the question of how and why political mobilization and organization of Mexican immigrants are different in Chicago and Houston. *Órale* is a Mexican expression, full of enthusiasm, that, among other things, is used to close a deal in a courageous way, and in which both parties are fully confident on the successfulness of the enterprise that is about to begin. Preliminary results of this research were presented at the “Research Seminar on Mexico and US-Mexican Relations” in the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, October 30, 2002.

organizations, service providers, unions, church-based organizations, chambers of commerce, civic associations, and Mexican state federations. Also immigration scholars, Mexican officials from the Mexican Consulate, and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were interviewed, as well as city officials in both cities, and several local politicians whose names were mentioned by activists and leaders in the first set of interviews: five state representatives, one state senator, and four city council members in the Houston area; and three state representatives, one state senator, and three aldermen in the Chicago area. 52 interviews of the whole *Órale Politics!* set were considered for research purposes in the current paper.

The author is currently an advisor to the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.² Research for this paper was funded in part by the *Mexico-North Research Network's* "Fellowship Program in Transnationalism." The author would like to acknowledge and thank Rebecca Hirade (Columbia University, New York City), Patricia Pinzón (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM, Mexico City), and Joaquín Llaca (ITAM), for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of the final draft of this paper.

Following, this paper presents a theoretical section ("On Transnationalism," and "Political Transnationalism and *Órale Politics!*"), then it addresses transnational politics in Chicago and Houston, first, by pointing out the issues, and actors that are involved in transnational activities, and then by addressing the main components of the process itself.

On Transnationalism

The term "transnationalism" is now commonly used by a growing cluster of social scientists. However, some authors state that the term is practically useless: it tries to explain too much, and it ends up explaining nothing, or even worse, its regular users seem not to agree on the definition of the term. Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999), assert that transnational migration studies form a "highly fragmented field that lacks a well-defined theoretical framework." Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2002) assert that the concept "is a blurry one, a catchall notion" that includes references to globalization,

² The opinions expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the author and not necessarily represent those of the Mexican government.

diasporas, transnational social fields, transnational communities, transnational social circuits, and binational societies. As such, these authors state that the term has lost much of its analytical power.

This confusion seems to have its origins in the “generosity” of the term. It is generous in the sense that it can be used in fields like sociology, economy, political science, history, geography, and anthropology. In essence, the term is a multidisciplinary, complex one.

This makes things relatively easy for the lightly-informed critics of the concept. Transnationalism, as a whole, will always lack something; there will always be something that is left out of its explanatory frame. No wonder. The term itself is developed through several disciplines in a simultaneous way. Different theoretical interpretations lead to the application of different methodologies and different considerations of units of analysis, which go from the individual, the family, organizations, the society, the economy and cultural practices, to the interactive foreign policies between two or more nation-states.

However, there are some common agreements on the nature and essence of the term. It is mainly framed within the study of international migration, and their units of analysis assume a relatively obvious duality regarding its own behavior: duality in the daily life of the individual or the family; duality of the relationship between organizations that deal with immigrants’ issues and the host and sending states; or duality of the leadership’s agenda of these organizations, for example. Additionally, economic, cultural, political, and social activities are recognized as spaces that are built by their protagonists, mainly immigrants, and that these spaces cross geographic borders in an endless array of forms. Transnationalism goes well beyond conventional borders of nation-states.

The main consensus among theorists of transnationalism is perhaps the notion of transnationalism as a process, or set of processes. This implies that its elements can be studied either as explained or explanatory variables, depending on the theoretical framework and methodology that the researcher chooses to work with.

Referring specifically to the essence of the term as a process, new consensus emerge when trying to distinguish this process from others that immigrants have lived through history, in which they have also related to their home-state. According to Portes (1999),

things are different this time because, historically speaking, the number of persons that participate in the process is a large one in relative and absolute terms; because of the advanced status of international communications and technology; and because the cumulative and repetitive character of the process translate this type of immigrants' participation in a "norm."

Finally, it is true that for the moment there is no consensus on a definition of the term that could cover each and every aspect of this multidisciplinary concept. There are common starting points on broad methodological and theoretical aspects when doing field research, like transnationalism being developed within a framework of migration theory, but that is pretty much it. This leads researchers of several disciplines into a serious exercise of disciplinary introspection.

The publication of *Nations Unbound*, by Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc in 1994, throws on the table a comprehensive definition of transnationalism,³ which becomes quickly accepted by a growing cluster of migration scholars as a starting point in the theoretical development of the term: "We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders." However, the authors of *Nations Unbound* recognize that several researchers were "moving in the same direction," as early as 1979, with Chaney's "people with feet in two societies." Others would follow up in an independent way: Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988, Appadurai 1991, Gupta 1992, Kearney 1991, Nagengast and Kearney 1990, Rouse 1989, 1991, 1992, etc.

Since then, several authors have stated their position about the practical and theoretical development of the term in many directions, and through several fields within the social sciences. M. P. Smith (1994) states that transnational political organization and mobilization take place at multiple levels, underscoring the struggle between the "global governance" agenda of international organizations and multinational corporations, and the "survival strategies" by which transnational migrant networks are socially [and politically] constructed. Portes (1996) argues that migrants use a "transnational space" as a way to avoid regulatory obstacles to their social mobility. To make his point, for

³ Certainly, the first approaches on the definition of the term by these authors appeared in 1992 (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1992a, 1992b)

example, he points out that changes in the Mexican constitution to allow dual nationality would lead to the consolidation of a larger transnational community. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) edited *Transnationalism from Below*, a collection of essays that addressed transnationalism from a theorizing perspective, in which the authors point out that the term indeed is a complex process involving macro and micro processes, that affect “power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and social organization at the level of locality.”

Torres (1998) proposes transnational cultural and political identities as an alternative to the notion of a culturally homogeneous public space confined within the border of a nation-state, leaving the notion of the nation-state itself unchallenged. Portes (1999) identifies ‘transnational communities’ as a research issue with significant theoretical potential, and emphasizes that it is through networks across political borders, created by immigrants, people “are able to lead dual lives.” Glick-Schiller (1999) claims that “transnational migration and the transnational political practices of nation-states are not new phenomena.” She draws attention to the restructuring of global capitalism at the end of the twentieth century, and its role in the relationship between transnational migration and nation-state building. Finally, she reserves the term ‘transnationalism’ “for the collective outcome of multiple forms of transnational processes [and perspectives].” Fitzgerald (2000) proposes different levels of institutionalization of transnationalism within a dual framework of citizenship and nation-state, and works on “Mexican political transnationalism” from a historical perspective.

Brettell and Hollifield (2000) compare migration theories across anthropology, demography, economics, history, law, political science and sociology. They address the issue by asking the question if transnationalism in the U.S. experience is a characteristic of the first generation of contemporary migrants, or if it will endure and mean something different in the twenty-first century, in comparison to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also point out that transnationalism has mainly anthropology-roots, and that its impact has been felt mostly in disciplines like sociology and political science. In a similar effort, Foner, Rumbaut, and Gold (2000) expose immigration research from a multidisciplinary perspective, and certainly address research on transnationalism from a multinational perspective, focusing on Filipino nurses (Choy), Mexican indigenous immigrants (Rivera-Salgado), Mexican women

(Hirsch), Japanese-Peruvians (Takenaka), and Dominicans, Brazilians, and Indians (Levitt).

Within a context of 'localities,' Foner (2001) emphasizes transnational connections of new immigrants in the city of New York. In the same volume, Pessar and Graham address the reciprocal influence between Dominicans' transnational political identities and New York politics, and R. C. Smith deals with the main obstacles of Mexicans to mobilize in New York. Also referring to New York City, Cordero-Guzman, R. C. Smith, and Grosfoguel address migration and transnational processes from an ethnic and racial perspective, taking into account the Dominican (Graham), Salvadorian (Mahler), Chinese (Liang), and Puerto Rican (Conway, Bailey, and Ellis) cases. Cordero-Guzman & Co. "add a historical dimension to the study of transnational life and processes among immigrants in New York," and they contextualize these processes "in order to examine the local effects of global, national, and local policies and stratification patterns."

In the context of a broader Latino framework, Suárez-Orozco and Páez (2002) state that "transnationalism turns out to be a complex set of social adaptations," and that these "transnational adaptations need to be systematically examined over time and across generations." They also point out that Latinos are also becoming increasingly relevant actors with influence in political processes both "here" (the U.S.) and "there" (their home country), and emphasize the importance of the Spanish language in the process. Ebaugh and Saltzman-Chafetz (2002) address the issue of transnational religious networks, and the lack of spaces for the religious theme in transnational literature. Finally, Fitzgerald (2004) mentions that 'transnationalism' indeed has been an important part of labor ideology and organization at earlier periods in American history. Moreover, he asserts that given the significance of transnationalism as an ideology and movement, it would seem prudent to reserve the term for a more specific, careful usage than the catch-all used in the migration literature.

Indeed, since 1992, many more scholars had something to say on the matter. With the aim to identify the main trends on transnationalism for each related discipline I did, in February 2004, a search of the term "Transnational / Transnationalism" in the *Social*

Science Abstracts Database.⁴ As we can see in **table 1**, the contents of 1278 papers were related to the term since 1982. Before 1992-94 most papers were related to the term “transnational” and, for the period 1994-2003, most papers were related to the term “Transnationalism.” Almost two thirds of all the literature on the term has been written in the period 1998-2003.

TABLE 1

***Social Sciences Abstracts:
Papers on Transnational /
Transnationalism***

YEAR	# OF PAPERS
2003	129
2002	161
2001	143
2000	153
1999	127
1998	104
1997	94
1996	69
1995	89
1994	60
1993	13
1992	10
1991	16
1990	15
1989	9
1988	18
1987	13
1986	16
1985	9
1984	8
1983	16
1982	6
TOTAL	1278

In a second stage of the research, we selected 428 papers whose contents were directly related to the term “transnationalism.”⁵ In a primary classification, we detected three research fields that dealt with the term in a consistent and systematic ways, regardless if they were implicitly or explicitly part of a discipline: communication, gender, and religion. We classified the subjects of study of these 428 papers in these three fields of study, and in the following disciplines: Anthropology (includes Ethnologic and

⁴ This electronic database offers information (citations and abstracts) on more than 350 key international, English-language periodicals in the social sciences; starting in February 1983 to the present (although some information for 1982 is also included), with abstracts starting in January 1994.

⁵ 166 papers that were related to Asian studies were not considered for this research, mostly because we decided to focus on the study of specific disciplines and fields of studies, and not on regional studies, although Latin American and European regions were implicitly considered in this work.

Ethnographic studies), Economics, Law, Political Science (includes International Relations), and Sociology. For the field of Migration Studies, we included papers that specifically dealt with transnational issues from a migration perspective, regardless of their discipline.

In **table 2**, we can see the most common subjects of study for nine disciplines/research fields regarding transnationalism since 1982.⁶ In **table 3**, we have the most important transnational fields that have been developed in these disciplines/research fields, also since 1982.⁷ The ‘subject of study’ is a topic that is the main objective of the paper’s research, and that appears in a systematic way in the referred field of research/discipline. A ‘transnational field’ is a transnationalism-related concept that has been developed mainly from a theoretical standpoint in the research, and that appears in a systematic way in the referred field of research/discipline. For example, for the discipline of Law, ‘Transnational Crime’ in table 2 means that the issue is a common subject of study of papers on transnationalism. In table 3, it means that the same subject has been significantly developed from a theoretical standpoint for Law studies.

From this information, we can see that Anthropology, Sociology and Migration Studies are highly related in the subjects of study of their research, and in the theoretical development of terms like Transnational Migration, Transnational Communities, and the concept of Transnationalism itself. In the same way, Economics and Political Science are interrelated in their subjects of study (Globalization, Transnational Corporations, and Capitalism); whereas Political Science, in comparison to Economics, has diversified in a more extensive way its theoretical contributions to the Social Sciences on matters related to transnationalism. Gender, Communication, and Religion studies have definitely gone their own way regarding both, subjects of study, and theoretical research on transnationalism.

⁶ We detected 44 different subjects of study for History, however, none of them was dominant in the field, neither there was a dominant transnational field on the matter.

⁷ In tables 2 and 3, ‘subjects of study’ and ‘transnational fields’ appear in accordance to their order of importance for each discipline/research field.

TABLE 2

DISCIPLINE/ RESEARCH FIELD	SUBJECT OF STUDY
Anthropology	Identity Transnational Communities Transnationalism
Communication	Political Communication Transnational Media
Economics	Globalization Transnational Corporations Capitalism Neoliberalism
Gender	Gender Feminism Women Nation-State
Law	Transnational Crime Drug War Transnational Criminal Organizations United States of America Transnational Security Money Laundering
Religion	Catholic Church Transnational Communities Globalization Latin America
Migration Studies	Transnational Communities International Migration Transnational Migration Transnationalism Citizenship United States of America Latin America
Political Science	Globalization State / Nation-State European Union Transnational Corporations Global Capitalism
Sociology	Transnational Communities Transnationalism Transnational Migration Globalization Internacional Migration

TABLE 3

DISCIPLINE/ RESEARCH FIELD	TRANSNATIONAL FIELD
Anthropology	Identity/Transnational Identity Transnational Communities Transnational Migration Transnationalism
Communication	Transnational Media Transnational Communication
Economics	Globalization Transnational Corporations
Gender	Transnational Spaces Transnational Feminism
Law	Transnational Organized Crime Transnational Crime Transnational Security - Mexico Transnational Security - Drug War Transnational Human Rights
Religion	Transnational Religion Transnational Communities
Migration Studies	Transnational Communities Transnational Migration Transnationalism International Migration
Political Science	Transnational Corporations Globalization Transnational Politics Transnational Communities Transnational Relations Transnational Ruling Class Transnationalization
Sociology	Transnationalism Transnational Migration Transnational Communities

The transnational field of ‘Transnational Communities’ is, by far, the more developed in theoretical terms across disciplines. ‘Transnational Migration,’ ‘Transnationalism,’ ‘Globalization’ and ‘Transnational Corporations’ are theoretically developed by at least two research fields/disciplines each. The other fifteen major transnational fields have been developed on their own by only one research field/discipline.

These two stages of our research⁸ point out that *the blurry stuff* in the study of transnationalism might be highly related with the theoretical study of transnational

⁸ In a third stage, currently under progress, we select the papers of the database that have contributed in a solid manner to the theoretical development of the term ‘transnationalism’ in order to identify their

communities across disciplines, and probably in the development of theoretical considerations on the term among Sociology, Anthropology, and Migration Studies.

Indeed, it seems that the time to call things by their name has arrived. The use of the term “transnationalism” has been transformed in the last twelve years to a point in which it is practically impossible to sustain the broader sense of the term beyond its generic roots. The theoretical development of concepts like transnational politics, transnational religion, transnational crime, transnational identity, transnational media, transnational spaces, transnational human rights, transnational communications, transnational corporations, transnational feminism, transnational ties, transnational security, and transnational ruling class, are leading researchers on transnationalism to deal with the issue from its own theoretical perspective, with their own research tools and methodologies, which leads on its own to the formation and consolidation of the term within each research field/discipline. The time to deal with political, sociological, religious, anthropological, gender, historical, and other “transnationalisms,” has arrived.

Political Transnationalism and *Órale Politics!*

Making reference to **Smith and Guarnizo (1998)**, transnationalism, and certainly political transnationalism, can be addressed from three perspectives: the micro level, in which the units of analysis are the individual and the family; the macro level, in which society, state politics, and the economy, are the units of analysis; and the meso-level (intermediate), in which organizations are the main unit of analysis. *Órale Politics!* is framed within the intermediate, meso-level, and its main contribution to the debate about the concept of political transnationalism have to do with different aspects of political mobilization and organization of an immigrant community who lives and works in a host society.

Under the consideration that political scientists who address political transnationalism focus on the causes and effects of transnational political activities, *Órale Politics!* puts on the table the following premises:

methodology, working hypotheses, units of analysis (individual, family, group, institution, organization, the society, the economy, cultural practices, the polity, and the state), conceptual references built around the term, and levels of analysis (macro, meso, micro). This, with the aim to generate a typology of the use of the term, and its theoretical and methodological development since 1982.

1. As a starting point, doing research on transnational organizations presents more advantages than doing research on transnational communities, or at an individual level. Transnational organizations deal with a migrant constituency, and sometimes have a double agenda that defends the interests of such constituency, in both sides of the border. The average researcher generally has access to these agendas, to the leadership of the organizations and their activities, whereas it is difficult for the average researcher to obtain enough, representative, evidence about the political transnationalization process of an individual or the community as a whole.
2. At a macro-level, when doing reference to the concept of political transnationalism, it is commonly related to the process of globalization, and it tends to conclude that the nation-state is in crisis. At an intermediate level, political transnationalism is explained by the existence of the state, and it is the state's actions or lack of actions the core explanatory variable of the process of formation, consolidation and proliferation of transnational organizations.
3. Basically, political transnationalism, at a meso-level, explains the dynamics of power relations between an organized community, and two states, the sending and the receptor. This double and simultaneous relationship explains different levels of empowerment of the migrant community through time. This reasoning focuses mostly on the interaction among actors, and not on the actors themselves.
4. Political transnationalism is not the only explanation about the empowerment process of an immigrant community living and working in a host society. The higher the levels of political mobilization, participation, and incorporation of an immigrant community, the higher the expectations of empowerment for the community in an urban context. The question here is who or what determines in a local context the different levels of political involvement of the community. In Chicago, Machine Politics still defines and shapes the potential empowerment of any immigrant group in the city; in Houston, and generally in Texas, citizenship is an essential step towards community empowerment.

TABLE 4

ISSUE	“TRANSNATIONALISM”	“POLITICAL TRANSNATIONALISM” -Intermediate Level-
Agenda	Global	Double agenda with concrete priorities
Surviving Strategies	Local and international, global targets	Local and international political institutions, governments
Relations to Global Institutions	Migrant networks in contact with global institutions	Not necessarily
Against Neoliberalism	Transnationalism from below generally does	Not necessarily
Prevailing Forces of Change	Economy	Economy and political power
Political Priorities	Feminism, environmentalism, globalization	Legalization of undocumented immigrants, workers’ rights, politics in the home country
Relation to Political Power	Not necessarily: Home Town Associations	A must: State Federations
Approach to Migration Issues	Focused on migration, and globalization interests	Mainly on causes and consequences of migration, from a political perspective
Historical Considerations	There is a need to give a historical focus to the research	History matters, however, most studies consider history from a short-term perspective
State	Considered as a contextual variable	Sending and host states <u>are</u> the context
Critics	Transnational practices have always existed	Not in this form
More Critics	This only works for first generation immigrants	Not so sure, the immigrant and Chicano mutual influence at a leadership level, along with a powerful Spanish media, might endure transnational practices at an organizational level
Transnational Structures	Social transnational structures: social organization plus social migrant networks	Social and political transnational structures
Power I	Political power relationships have the same status than gender, race, ethnicity, and social status	Focuses on power flows, and its relationship with other factors – gender, race, etc.
Power II	Power is to be exerted	Power is to be exerted ‘here and there,’ organization and mobilization do matter

In **table 4**, based on some of the issues addressed by Smith and Guarnizo (1998), and on results of the research *Órale Politics!*, we can see some specific differences between “Transnationalism” in general terms, and “Political Transnationalism.”

Finally, this process of looking for political and policy solutions to political and policy problems of a migrant community within a binational context is a full exercise of political transnationalism. The essence of this process of being is “living here and there” (Suárez-Orozco and Paez, 2002). However, in Spanish the term attains a more complete meaning from a ‘process of being’ perspective: ‘ser y estar, aquí y allá.’ To be (the essence of being as a human being) here and there, and to be (physically being) here and there. Mexicans have been (physically) in the U.S. since day one, but that is not enough. Mexicans also have the right (or at least the choice) to be (in essence, to be themselves) in the U.S. It is through organization and mobilization that Mexicans *can be* in the U.S. and Mexico in a simultaneous manner.

Under the above exposed premises, in the following sections, I develop an analysis of political transnationalism based on the Mexican immigrant experience of transnational politics in Houston and Chicago.

Transnational Politics in Houston and Chicago: Issues and Actors

The central focus of this work is to expose and analyze the main processes of transnational politics from an organizational standpoint. In this section I will address the issues that lead to mobilization and organization of the Mexican immigrant community in Chicago and Houston, and the most important actors and their activities that are part of the process.

Issues

Two issues arise in Chicago and Houston as the most important topics in terms of organization and mobilization of Mexican immigrants: (1) issues related to the legalization of undocumented immigrants, and (2) issues related to the defense of immigrant workers rights in the United States. In Chicago, a third relevant issue is the right to participate in Mexican electoral politics for those Mexican citizens who live in

the United States. Other major issues that are addressed by the Mexican immigrant community in these two cities are access to education, housing, and health.

In Houston, the majority of organizations that address the concerns of Mexican immigrants focus on legalization and workers rights issues. Most leaders of community organizations in Houston support the right of Mexicans to participate in Mexican electoral politics. However, they accept that this had not been considered an issue for mobilization purposes. On the other hand, legalization and workers rights are highly inter-related issues in terms of organizational efforts to solve the problems that constantly affect immigrants. In Houston, within the issue of legalization, late amnesty cases are especially important from an organizational perspective.

Generally speaking, in Chicago, the issues form two blocks. One block of activists and organizations work on Mexicans' right to participate in Mexican electoral politics, and another block of activists and organizations work on legalization and workers rights issues. In the first block, there are more activists than organizations involved in the issue, whereas for the second block it is exactly the opposite, there are more organizations than activists. Of course, there are organizations and activists that include the three issues in their agenda. In general terms, mobilization related to legalization and the defense of workers rights is more pronounced than mobilization related to defending the political rights of Mexicans abroad.

In Chicago, similarly to Houston, most legalization issues are related with workers issues in organizational terms. Activism around legalization seems to take the lead in the agenda in terms of priority, unlike Houston, where both issues are addressed with similar levels of priority. In both cities, local issues related to education, health, and housing appear regularly on scene, and most organizations that currently deal with legalization and workers rights issues have capitalized on their own experience, or the experience of other organizations, when mobilizing people. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York City (9/11), two issues have appeared on the scene as well: the no-match letters sent by the Social Security Administration to employers who presumably employ undocumented aliens, and the drivers' licenses that became more difficult to get if you could not prove your legal migratory status in Texas and Illinois, as in the majority of the states of the union.

Regarding the nature of the issues, the legalization of undocumented immigrants and the no-match letters are considered mostly federal issues. Drivers' licenses are considered to be state issues; and access to health, education and housing are considered mostly local issues. However, activists may target federal, state, and/or local politicians regarding any of these issues. Additionally, organizations in these two cities have started to adopt a double agenda, in which, depending on the issue, they address certain problems from a double perspective, trying to engage politicians and/or institutions from both sides of the Mexican-American border in the solution process. A double agenda sometimes also implies that the organization deals with issues in both sides of the border. Finally, more in Chicago than in Houston, some organizations address certain issues within a neighborhood context, more than at a community level.

Actors

The most important actors (sources of organization and mobilization) in these two cities are community organizations, the Catholic Church, and unions. Chambers of commerce (Mexican or Mexican American), civic associations (mostly Mexican American), Mexican state federations (which generally are major groupings of Mexican hometown associations), and Mexican political parties and organizations, have played a lesser role in the dynamics of mobilizing people, but other actors do not disregard their potential involvement in the process. Actors also consider the local Hispanic media an important player in the process. Actors that can be considered allies or targets of mobilization are: the Mexican government, mostly through the Mexican consulate in these two cities; local politicians, including members of the city council, state representatives and senators, mayors and governors; and at the federal level, US representatives and senators. Activists also target candidates for any of these posts.

Organizations that Work with the Mexican Immigrant Community

In both cities community organizations can be classified by the way they are organized. Some are considered to be top-down organized, in the sense that they do exert a grant from a sponsoring foundation, or government program, or church funds in addressing certain needs of the immigrant population, and the sources of financing require the

organization to be accountable for. Most organizations that are service providers fall into this category. Most of these organizations work for, with and within the community but they are not considered to work on a membership driven basis. On the other hand, we have the bottom-up type of organization. These organizations generally work with a budget financed by membership fees, which generally are voluntary. These organizations consider themselves community-based organizations mostly because they address the concerns of the community as a whole, regardless of the nature of the problem, and because chances are very high that their leadership has emerged from the community itself.

We also have organizations that are a combination of both, community-based organizations that provide legal or educational services to the community, with a budget supported by service and/or membership fees, and grants. These three types of organizations may differ in organizational strategies, ideology, work philosophies, and legalization goals (i.e.: partial legalization vs. general amnesty for undocumented immigrants), but they tend to converge in the common goal of empowering the community. A fourth type of organization is the coalition of organizations that are generally formed around an issue or a common set of goals.

In both cities we might find the four types of organizations. In Chicago a significant number of these organizations are located in Mexican neighborhoods, and they generally conduct their business by addressing the needs of the community in those very specific neighborhoods. In Houston, this neighborhood model is not as evident as in Chicago. Moreover, organizations in Houston tend to be part of state-wide coalitions, whereas in Chicago it is more likely for organizations to initially become part of local coalitions. Another difference is that in Chicago, community-based organizations seem to rely on the family as the basic component of the organization, whereas in Houston this rationale is not that evident, although things are changing in this aspect.

Following, I introduce the most important organizations that deal with political mobilization of Mexican immigrants. In general terms, this research focuses on organizations with a strong Mexican constituency, though most of them deal with the needs of immigrants in general, and not exclusively Mexicans. At the end of the section for each city, I address a brief discussion on types and formation of coalitions and

alliances, and mention other organizations that are related to the process of mobilization and organization of the migrant community.

Houston

The Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA). It was founded on February 18, 1998, and its main goal is to assess immigrant aliens in late amnesty cases. Its creation is pointed out as a direct result of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRAIRA). They define themselves as an organization in which immigrants work with and for immigrants. They have about one thousand registered members, and an average of three hundred persons attend their meetings twice per month, and more than eighty percent of its membership is Mexican. The organization gets financed through voluntary fees of its members, and they have chapters in San Jose and Los Angeles in California, and in Florida, New York/New Jersey, Atlantic City, and Seattle.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). This organization was founded in 1917. The AFSC-Houston has been working on immigrants' projects since 1987, through the Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP), however, the presence of this organization at a national level in dealing with immigrants' issues dates back to 1939. From a broad perspective, the main goal of AFSC-Houston is to improve the capacity of local immigrants to get organized and mobilized, through a solid assessment of programs and projects that implicitly or explicitly enhance the formation and proliferation of organizations that deal with immigrants' issues. Most of its budget comes directly from individual contributions to AFSC, and foundation grants, however, its national headquarters in Philadelphia deals directly with important budgetary decisions. The decision to close the AFSC-Houston branch in 2003 came precisely from Philadelphia. In the last 15 years, most organizations that have dealt with immigrants' issues in Houston were somehow related to AFSC-ILEMP and its historical leader, María Jiménez.

The National Organizers Alliance (NOA). NOA's mission is "to advance progressive organizing for social, economic and environmental justice... [NOA's members] are organizers who are responsible to a defined constituency and who help build that

constituency through leadership development, collective action and the development of democratic structures.”⁹ This organization was created in 1992, although in the Houston area it has been working with immigrants since 2000. In Houston the main accomplishment of NOA is to improve immigrant community organizing, mostly through leadership development, and constituency and networking building.

Mexicanos en Acción (MAC). Its main goal is “to defend the civil and human rights of Mexican immigrants, and every immigrant, inside and outside US borders, and the protection of the environment.”¹⁰ Founded on November 1999, MAC is the direct product of the mobilization that emerged among Mexican immigrants when President Zedillo’s administration tried unsuccessfully to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico. MAC is also a very representative unit of relatively small organizational efforts that regularly appear on the Houston scene, mainly as a result of an issue that affected the community.

The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). The TMO defines itself as a broad-based, interfaith-based, nonpartisan “coalition of congregations, schools, and voluntary associations which are dedicated to teaching ordinary citizens how to participate in the decisions which affect their families and communities.”¹¹ The organization’s involvement in immigrant’s issues is relatively new, and has focused on issues like access to health, lobbying for the construction of a day labor center, and an active participation on leadership workshops related to immigrants issues in the Harris County area. Activists in the field describe TMO as a “white-lead, middle-class, faith-based,” organization that has recently targeted the immigrant population as a potentially strong constituency.

The Coalition of Higher Education for Immigrant Students (CHEIS). Founded in 1998, the purpose of this organization is “to promote research and policy development, build collaborative partnerships, secure funding and conduct community outreach to provide broader educational opportunities for immigrant students.”¹² Among the main accomplishments of the coalition is the lobbying effort to pass the bill HB1403 by the 77th Texas legislature, and signed by the governor on June 17, 2001. Under certain

⁹ See <http://www.noacentral.org>

¹⁰ Mexicanos en Acción, undated leaflet.

¹¹ See <http://tmohouston.net>

¹² See <http://www.go2college.org>

conditions, this bill allows undocumented students the possibility of going to college at in-state tuition rates, and the possibility of receiving state financial aid. After Texas, and up to mid-2003, California, Utah, New York, Washington State, Oklahoma, and Illinois, in that order, have adopted similar bills.

Coalitions in Houston

During the last fifteen years, coalitions in Houston have shown different levels of institutionalization. In accordance to Benito Juarez, the head of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs in Houston (MOIRA), there are three different types of coalitions in Houston. The first type is when organizations exchange information and coordinate actions mostly through networking efforts, focusing on specific issues and activities (protest rallies outside city hall or the Mexican consulate, for example), and mostly working like non-permanent and informal alliances. Generally, one major organization leads the networking effort. The main supporters for this type of organizational alliances have been the AFSC-ILEMP, and more recently the AFL-CIO's Service Employees International Union (AFL-CIO, SEIU).

The second type is a group of organizations or committees that try to empower the community through a bottom-up type of organizational functioning, in the sense that the opinion and the needs of the immigrant community are the driven force of the coalition's actions. The SEIU-backed Houston Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty (HCDA) is an organizational effort of this kind. The third type is a group of organizations that deal with immigrant issues from a top-down perspective, also with the aim to empower the community, but mostly through leadership meetings of organizations that include service providers.

The actions of these coalitions do not necessarily address the most urgent needs of the community, mostly because these actions also depend on the available budget of the organizations that are members of the coalition. During the 90's the Houston Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (HIRC) was an organizational effort that dealt with immigration issues in a similar manner. Finally, coalitions like CHEIS are an organizational effort that deals with education issues of immigrants from these two last perspectives. They have direct contact with parents who have their children in school, they try to prioritize

their needs when planning their actions, and they also have service-provider organizations in its board.

The main characteristics of coalitions in Houston is the lack of institutionalization in their structure, their high levels of informality, their actions are mostly issue-driven, and the fact that most of their administrative members are voluntary workers or the payment that they receive is by no means competitive in the labor market. Pancho Argüelles (NOA) points out that the concept of coalitions in Houston acquires the meaning of “circumstantial associations.” This condition is confirmed by Juárez’s statement: “the fact that you don’t see a coalition actively working or having meetings does not mean that the coalition does not exist anymore.”

However, in organizational terms, things are changing in Houston. The recent formation of the Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants is the first formal macro-organization that groups not only organizations that work at a community level with Latino immigrants –and not only Mexican immigrants. Among its 27 members you find the Mexican Consulate, several agencies from the local government, civic organizations, universities, banks, clinics, service providers, and even the Internal Revenue Service. This alliance has three major objectives: “provide orientation and support to Hispanic immigrants about services available in their own language; organize community events that promote the well being of the Hispanic immigrant community; and develop the cultural competency of professionals providing services to the Hispanic immigrant community.”¹³

Finally, other organizations, coalitions or institutions in the Houston area that are indirectly or sporadically involved in, or somehow related to, the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants are: the Center for Mexican American Studies and the Center for Immigration Research, both from the University of Houston; Central American Resource Center (CRECEN), Gulfton Area Neighborhood Organization / Central American Refugee Center (GANO-CARECEN), Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee, El Dorado Communications, Houston International University, De Madres a Madres, Asociación de Mujeres Hispanas, Houston Area Women’s Center, Houston Independent School District, Texas Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty, La Rosa, the Association for Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA), Amigos Volunteers in Education and

¹³ Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants’ leaflet, May 5, 2003.

Services (AVES), the Houston Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, and Avance Inc. Organizations that no longer exist: Texas Immigration and Refugee Coalition, Aldape Guerra Committee, Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Mexico, and the Coordinadora de Autodefensa y Participación Ciudadana.

Chicago

Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF). Founded on August 10, 1987 by Emma Lozano, the CSF is a community organization that deals with immigrant issues from several perspectives. It also works as a service provider, mostly assessing people in legal matters regarding immigration issues. It mobilizes people to address a wide-open agenda on issues that go from a general amnesty for the undocumented and gentrification issues, to the improvement of education conditions in the Chicago school system and the organization of registration and voting rallies in local, state, and US Congress elections.

CSF is also known for its networking, lobbying and, when necessary, confrontational actions against federal, state and local politicians when trying to accomplish its goals. Among its main accomplishments is the creation of the “Rudy Lozano” primary school, and a strong lobby effort to promote a general amnesty for undocumented immigrants at the federal level. The CSF’s decisions on mobilization, agenda-building, networking, and lobbying are generally taken by the Asamblea de los Pueblos Sin Fronteras (PSF), which works as the democratic body and consciousness of the CSF, under the *Principles of Zapatismo*. In general terms, the CSF leadership calls for a PSF meeting whenever an important decision needs to be taken. The main goal of CSF/PSF is to empower the community of immigrants and the disadvantaged, regardless of nationality or migratory status.

Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE). This organization was founded in 1953, and adopted its current structure in 1972. Since then, PILNE organizes annually the street festival “Fiesta del Sol,” in order to finance other activities of the organization. The main goal of this organization, in accordance to Teresa Fraga, is to empower the Mexican-origin community who live in the Pilsen neighborhood, mostly through the generation of leadership and other organizations. Most of its activities

address neighbor's health, education, public services, gentrification, and housing. Immigration rights issues are also addressed from a broader perspective. Among its main accomplishments throughout the last 30 years is the creation of self-financed neighborhood organizations and programs that directly address the neighbors' needs (Proyecto Vivienda, El Valor, Alivio Medical Center, El Técnico).

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (Heartland Alliance). Founded in 1888, and formerly known as "Travelers and Immigrants Aid," this organization defines itself as "an anti-poverty, human rights organization that provides housing, health care and human services to improve the lives of impoverished Chicagoans."¹⁴ Currently, "Enlaces America" is a program within Heartland Alliance that evolved from the binational migration project known as the "Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network" (1995-2001). Enlaces America "facilitates the empowerment of transnational communities in their commitment to building an equitable, sustainable, and dignified way of life for peoples in the Americas." This program "seeks to maximize the potential for transnational leadership and regional policy advocacy within Latino immigrant communities in the United States."¹⁵ The work of this organization is developed in three areas: Immigrant Community Leadership Development, Migration Policy and Human Rights, and Regional Linkages.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Between 1992 and 2001, the main efforts of AFSC-Chicago in dealing with Mexican immigrants took place through the program "The Mexican Agenda." The main goal of the program was "to involve the most politically active segment of the Mexican community" in the Chicago area through uniting "Mexican and Mexican-American community organizations and residents around issues of common concern, such as U.S. legislation, political developments in Mexico, and treatment of Mexican immigrants."¹⁶ The program's results were two-fold: "increasing the coordination among community activists and leaders, and promoting the formation or more, new and better community organizations."¹⁷ Albeit in the last years of the program, significant efforts were made in order to promote and lobby for the right to vote of Mexicans living abroad.

¹⁴ See <http://www.heartland-alliance.org>

¹⁵ See <http://www.enlacesamerica.org>

¹⁶ AFSC's undated leaflet "AFSC's work with immigrants in the United States."

¹⁷ See http://www.afsc.org/greatlakes/afscchic/AGENDA_M/LAM3.HTM

More recently, first through the “Latino Community Empowerment” program, and then through its current nation-wide “Project Voice,” AFSC-Chicago has focused on enhancing its immigration and refugee work by working in three areas: base building through leadership development, alliance building through public education, and networking for policy impact on immigration grounds.¹⁸ Also starting in 2001, AFSC has shown, at a national level, an open and strong support for the legalization of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

The Resurrection Project (TRP). This organization is founded in 1990 as the Pilsen Resurrection Development Corporation. In 1994, Interfaith Community Organization and Pilsen Resurrection merge to become TRP. Through the accomplishment of community organizing, community development, and community programs, TRP galvanizes “financial, human, physical and spiritual resources to build new homes and build hope”¹⁹ in the highly Mexican-origin populated neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, and Back of the Yards. Most local Catholic parishes from this neighborhoods form part of, and/or actively participate in TRP’s tasks. Basically, TRP’s community organizing efforts are directed to empower residents through networking, alliance, leadership, and trust building. In accordance to Salvador Cervantes, the lead organizer of TRP, the idea is to relate the people’s faith and family values to the solutions of community’s current pressing issues.

Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (Chicago Interfaith Committee). This organization is the Chicago chapter of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Under the philosophy of ‘religion and labor working together’, the objectives of Chicago Interfaith Committee are: “1) support workers by helping to encourage companies to recognize unions and negotiate contracts in good faith; 2) rebuild a working relationship between the religious and labor communities; and 3) educate the larger interfaith community about the role of unions and the labor movement in securing justice for workers.”²⁰ One of the most important projects sponsored by this organization is the “Interfaith Workers’ Rights Center,” in which special emphasis is put on workers rights violations of undocumented immigrants.

¹⁸ See <http://www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/project-voice.htm>

¹⁹ The Resurrection Project, Annual Report, 2000.

²⁰ Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, undated leaflet, early 2000’s.

Erie Neighborhood House (Erie House, or Casa Comunal Erie) Originally founded in 1870 as the Holland Presbyterian Church, its efforts were addressed to help the immigrant community from Holland. In 1915, it became the Erie Chapel Institute, and throughout the years, this organization has assisted the immigrant communities of Holland, Germany, Polish, Italian, Armenian, and more recently it has addressed the needs of the black and Latino communities in West Town, and Humboldt Park. Erie House mainly offers a wide range of services to immigrants: day care services, education for adults, English classes, basic and emergency health services, labor training, computer training, job agency services, etc. Erie House also works on naturalization and voter registration campaigns with the aim of making immigrants conscious of the importance of becoming citizens, and exerting their political rights. Finally, this organization also encourages and assists the community's efforts of getting organized to solve their own problems: in 1995, West Town United (WTU) is founded through an initiative launched by Erie House.

Casa Aztlán. This organization was founded in 1970, and addresses mostly the needs of the Mexican community in the Pilsen Neighborhood. Similar to Erie House, Casa Aztlán offers a diversity of services and programs to the immigrant community; however, Casa Aztlán is also characterized for encouraging the development of the arts among the community, and for its readiness to form or be part of coalitions or alliances that defend and/or enhance the political rights of the Mexican immigrant community in the United States or in Mexico. Currently, Casa Aztlán is a milestone organization in which two major historical forces, the Chicano Movement, and the school of thought that emerged from the Mexican student movement of 1968, converge together in Chicago to frame, from an ideological perspective, the backing and patronage to the organization and mobilization efforts of the Mexican community.

Unión Latina de Chicago (Unión Latina). This organization is founded on March 2000, and is presented as a coalition of organizations (mostly parishes, unions, and small community organizations) that work together against gentrification, and for workers rights. Unión Latina has mainly focused on the wrongdoings of temporary-employment agencies, the creation of day labor centers, leadership formation, and labor and political education of the community. They do coordinate some of their actions with the local chapter of the AFL-CIO, they tend to target local authorities and politicians (city agencies, council members), and they are a good example of an organization that exerts

in a persistent and efficient way mobilization of immigrants with a relatively well coverage of the Hispanic media.

West Town Leadership United (WTLU). This organization is the result of the merge of two West Town community networks in 2000, the West Town Leadership Project, and the West Town United. WTLU defines itself as a “family-focused, multi-issue community organization dedicated to serving the West Town/Humboldt Park neighborhoods on three levels: leadership development, building a network of relationships between people, and community organizing to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.” Their goal as an organization is to “promote, safeguard, develop, and build a multi-ethnic, mixed income, racially diverse, and family-friendly community through ongoing education, leadership training, and organizing in West Town.” Gentrification and affordable housing, parent leadership development in education issues, the support of immigrant rights groups, and attention to the relationships among youth, parents, community, and police, are the main fields of action for this organization. In April 2002, WTLU had registered 31 institutional members, amongst schools, community organizations, parishes, and service providers.

Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO) This organization, founded on June 2001, is a coalition of more than 20 organizations (seven of them, Mexican state federations) in the Chicago area. Its main purpose is “to evaluate, coordinate, implement and support proposals made by Mexican and Mexican-American Organizations in relation to political, humanitarian, educational, economic, and civic activities that would contribute towards obtaining dignified living conditions for individuals of Mexican extraction in Mexico and the United States.”²¹ They also look forward to speaking “on behalf of the member organizations before local, state, and federal governments of Mexico and the United States.” COMMO is one of the first organizations of Mexican immigrants that started to address its agenda from a binational perspective, mainly dealing with local government and politicians in the US, and Mexican government and politicians and, of course, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago.

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). This coalition was founded in 1986, and currently groups more than 90 public and private organizations. The coalition’s mission is “to promote the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and

²¹ COMMO, By-rules of the organization, Article III, May 11, 2002.

equal participation in the civic, cultural, social, and political life” in the diversity of American society.²² Also the coalition “educates and organizes immigrant and refugee communities to assert their rights; promotes citizenship and civic involvement; monitors and analyzes policies affecting immigrants and refugees’ and raises public consciousness about the contributions of newcomers to the United States.”²³ The Ford Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services are important sponsors of the coalition, among other organizations or institutions. The ICIRR provides to the immigrant community the following services and programs: Public Information and Outreach, Training and Technical Assistance, Policy Evaluation and Monitoring, Advocacy and Civil Participation, Information and Referral Services, and Organizing and Leadership Development.

Coalitions in Chicago

In general terms we can say that coalitions in Chicago tend to be more formal and institutionalized than their counterparts in Houston. Many of Chicago’s coalitions have accumulated vast loads of experience on issues related to immigrant political mobilization through years and years of working on the matter, their sources of founding are relatively stable, and their personnel tends to be professional with reasonably competitive wages. Most of them are a combination of bottom-up and top-down organizations, and it is common for them to work on networking building at an institutional level, and address immigrant issues through fairly well established projects and programs.

Some activists and organization chairs emphasize the difference between alliances and coalitions in Chicago. Most of them agree that alliances are mostly issue-driven, and that they require a certain level of commitment with the cause, whereas to form a coalition, commitment and compromise are both required. In accordance to Rebekah Lusk (ICIRR), there is always a way to deal with these issues: “your organization can be a non-member of the coalition, which leaves the doors open for you to become our ally.” Last but not least, another difference between Chicago and Houston is that organizations in Chicago are already working towards forming strong and stable

²² ICIRR leaflet, undated, early 2000’s.

²³ ICIRR, Annual Report 2001.

coalitions on race and class grounds, for which they expect a major compromise and involvement of the AFL-CIO in the process of mobilization.

Other organizations, institutions, or coalitions in the Chicago area that are directly, indirectly or sporadically involved in, or somehow related to, the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants are: Concilio Hispano - Bensenville, Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño, United Network of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (UNIRR), Latino Organization of the Southwest (LOS), Instituto del Progreso Latino, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Little Village Community Development Corp., Coordinadora 96-2000, Latino Leadership Project, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Unión de Braceros Mexicanos, Bracero Justice Project, Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Chicago Homeless Coalition, Centro Romero, Coordinadora Internacional de Apoyo al Pueblo Mexicano, and Pilsen Alliance.

The Church

In general terms, church's actions are found at four levels. The basic level of action relies on priests, who lead or can be part of a parish. Priests work directly with and within the community, and are either Latinos or Anglos. The Hispanic Ministry of the Catholic Church (second level) is considered an intermediary between the first level (parish priest) and the third level, the office of the bishop, archbishop or the Cardinal. The Hispanic Ministry sometimes takes the lead in coordinating a strategy to deal with the problems of the immigrant community, and to bring the issues to the attention of highest levels within the diocese or archdiocese. A priest, a nun or a member of the laity may occupy the office of the Hispanic Ministry. In this process, the office of the bishop/archbishop generally ponders how to deal with issues that can be of national interest.

At the fourth level we have certain organizations that are financed totally or in large part by the Catholic Church, by a group of local parishes, or by an interfaith consortium, although this does not necessarily mean that they depend directly from the highest ecclesiastical authorities in order to act. For the clergy, as a whole, to advocate for

immigrants in their struggle for legalization and workers rights issues is a matter of social justice.

Houston

In Houston, the actions of religious organizations and the Hispanic Ministry have to deal with the mainstream Anglo majority of the archdiocese. Mexicans in Houston form the majority of the Latino constituency of the Catholic Church, although the Central American constituency is also significant. Within the context of mobilization, there are four types of organizational efforts lead by religious organizations: organizations that are supported by the church and the community; organizations that enhance the creation of other secular organizations that mobilize immigrants; church-based service providers; and organizational actions that advance political education among immigrants, and develop leadership formation.

Casa Juan Diego, founded in 1980, is a good example of an organization that deals with the every day and most elemental needs of undocumented immigrants, and that has the support of the community and the Catholic and Protestant churches in order to accomplish its tasks. In addition to the community support, acting in accordance to the principles and philosophy of the “Catholic Worker Movement” is pointed out as one of the principal strengths of the organization. Its actions are guided on the basis that the organization needs to continuously adapt to a changing environment, and that these actions need visibility and approval to maintain the community’s continuous support.

Casa Juan Diego, in accordance to Mark Zwick, also tries very hard to make people “think out of the box” at an individual level. It is not rare to find local or federal officials that have changed the way they look at the problems, and come across with innovative solutions, related to undocumented immigrants, in large part because of entering in contact with this organization.

The Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD), officially launched at a national level in November 1970 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has been successful in assisting and financing the creation of community-based organizational efforts, and self-help projects. One of its goals is to enhance the education and awareness of the whole Catholic community about the problems that face

undocumented immigrants in Houston. Stephanie Weber, who headed CCHD at the time, stated that “the idea is to engage wealthy Catholics with the poor and the needy.” The organization is part of the Secretariat for Social Concerns of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese.

The principle of action is never to back an initiative unless it comes from the community itself. The origins of the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA, mostly Mexican constituency), De Madres a Madres, and the Gulfton Area Neighborhood Organization / Central American Refugee Center (GANO-CARECEN, mostly Central American constituency) are directly related to the work of CCHD in providing the immigrant community in Houston with self-financing, highly effective, community-based organizations. The CCHD in Houston is also characterized by traditionally funding organizational efforts of the Metro Houston Interfaith.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston (Catholic Charities). Founded in 1943, this organization, “as an advocate of social justice, empowers the community through action and education...” Its vision statement reads “people of faith helping people in need achieve self-sufficiency.”²⁴ Currently, Catholic Charities is a United Way agency and a member of Catholic Charities USA, and, regardless of its links with the church hierarchy, it is a typical service provider that deals with certain issues that affect the immigrant community in the Houston-Galveston area, among other constituencies, through several programs. Recently, this organization has participated more openly in coalitions and organizational alliances that deal with immigrant issues in Houston.

Catholic Charities is also a member of the Secretariat for Social Concerns. The Galveston-Houston bishop directly assigns the organization’s responsibilities, and their programs are administered through four areas: Children and Family Services, Community Outreach, Immigration and Refugee Services, and Parish Outreach and Advocacy.

The Hispanic Ministry in Houston focuses its efforts on collaborating with “any secular organization that shares the same principles and values of the Church’s doctrine of social justice,” according to its director, Jorge Delgado. The Hispanic Ministry supports political mobilization of Latino immigrants mainly through leadership programs

²⁴ See <http://www.catholiccharities.org>

("Power to Serve"), and through an intensive networking effort among institutions and organizations that deal with immigrant issues.

At a parish level, the Latino Catholic Church follows the lines of speech and action of the bishop's office: the church is seen as the society's conscience, the voice of the voiceless, and the explicit support of actions to defend the human rights of the immigrant community. Within this context, the Catholic Church's support of the AFL-CIO Service Employees International Union's campaign to collect one million signatures was an active proof of such policy. However, priests that participate directly in mobilization or organizational efforts are more the exception than the rule.

Chicago

In Chicago the actions of priests with Latino constituencies, along with the actions of the Hispanic Ministry, take place in a context heavily influenced by the Polish, Irish and mainstream Anglo sectors of the archdiocese. Latino priests are considered a minority within the ecclesiastical body, despite their heavy Latino constituency. Priests (regardless if they are Latinos or not) who openly exert an activism concerning legalization and workers rights issues are considered the minority within the minority. Other churches, like the United Methodist Church are also involved in the process, although the Catholic Church is considered as the leading force.

When we speak about religiously based organizations in Chicago, we refer mainly to two types of community-based organizations. The first type is one founded by religious authorities, and generally works in coordination with Catholic authorities. The second type has some organizational links with religious authorities, and use Catholic symbols to mobilize people, but it shows high levels of autonomy in financial and logistical matters. The Resurrection Project, and Centro Legal Sin Fronteras are representative organizations of these two types, respectively. This type of organizations can be found all over the city, but mainly concentrated in Mexican neighborhoods, and addressing the needs of Mexican-origin population generally within the neighborhood's or the alderman district's limits. All of them have to work within a dense network of organizations that address the same problems, but from different perspectives: unions, service-provider organizations, local and state coalitions, and Mexican state federations

(macro associations that generally group Mexican hometown associations).

Additionally, in Chicago there are also organizations that address immigrants' rights from an interfaith perspective, like the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues.

Within the Catholic Church, the Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago (OPJ), "based in the Catholic Social Tradition, educates, advocates, and empowers through the Catholic Church, parishes, schools, institutions and with community partners to transform lives and society."²⁵ In accordance to its director, Bill Purcell, the OPJ mission "is not about charity, it is about a process of justice, it is about transforming the system," in order to directly assist the poor and vulnerable people through education and organization, and looking forward to accomplish systemic changes in public policy. They state that their primary focus is the parish, and their main customer is the Cardinal of the Archdiocese. The OPJ singles out the city of Chicago as a strong ideological and political base for the whole US Catholic Church.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development chapter (CCHD) within the Archdiocese of Chicago is part of the services offered by the Office of Peace and Justice. The role of this office is very similar to the Houston branch, they finance organizations or programs oriented to helping people help themselves. In 2001 the CCHD channeled grants to Chicago ACORN, to the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations, the Interfaith Leadership Project (Cicero and Berwyn), and The Resurrection Project, among others. The main difference between the Chicago and Houston branches is that in Houston the level of commitment and initiatives towards organizing and mobilizing immigrants has been steady, strong and visible; whereas in Chicago, it seems that they limit themselves to their institutional function of grant administrators.

In general terms, the Catholic Church in Chicago can be a strong force to make things happen, it can be the basis of a deep transformation of Mexicans' minds regarding their disposition to organize and mobilize, but the church is not taking any major initiative from an institutional perspective. The church's support of the AFL-CIO Service Employees International Union's campaign to collect one million signatures for a general amnesty in mid-late 2002 is a sign that things can be handled in a different way. However, any mobilization action is left to the priests' initiative, and it is not rare to see

²⁵ See http://www.archchicago.org/departments/peace_and_justice/peace_and_justice.shtm

priests participating in public demonstrations in Chicago, supporting issues related to Mexican immigrants' rights.

Unions

On February 16, 2000, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) launched a statement in New Orleans in which they asserted that the "AFL-CIO believes the current system of immigration enforcement in the United States is broken and needs to be fixed."²⁶ Among their starting points to fix the system was the recognition that undocumented workers should be provided permanent legal status through a new amnesty program; that regulated legal immigration is better than unregulated illegal immigration; and that a guest program on its own is not a solution.

This policy shift of mainstream unions towards undocumented immigrants has represented a big boost to the organization and mobilization processes of immigrants regarding legalization and workers' rights issues. Mainly through the AFL-CIO's Service Employees International Union (SEIU), union activists have coordinated a national campaign advocating for legalization. Indeed, their vision goes well beyond building a successful campaign. They are working hard to create a national movement around legalization for undocumented immigrants, who happen to be mostly workers. They prioritize legalization in their agenda because once legalization is attained, many problems related to workers rights will be easier to solve. A first step on this direction is the SEIU-sponsored grassroots campaign "A Million Voices for Legalization" in 2002.

Unions see themselves as key players in this process because of their experience with workers' organization and mobilization, the relatively large amount of available resources, their capacity to create inter-ethnic alliances among workers, and because when they knock the door of politicians at local, state, and national level, most of them, particularly democrats, do open it. For unions, advocating for legalization of undocumented immigrants is both, a matter of potential membership, and a matter of survival.

²⁶ See <http://www.aflcio.org>

In Houston, union's efforts to mobilize people are an uphill battle most of the time. Texas is a right-to-work state, and Houston in particular is a pro-business city, a combination that makes labor activism a little bit more complex than expected, regardless of what kind of expectations union activists may have. In Chicago, a union-friendly city, things go "smoother" in that respect. Complications arise when not all unions in the city, even within the AFL-CIO umbrella, agree or understand the goals of SEIU's effort. Some unions may support very lightly the effort; some may not support any kind of effort at all.

In both cities, the strategy is to work directly with the community, and in both cities activists had to start from zero in this task. In a paradoxical way, the task is challenging in both cities. In Chicago, where there are so many community organizations (which includes not only Mexicans, but other ethnic groups as well), that it becomes extremely difficult to deal with all of them within a unique agenda. On the other hand, in Houston, the relative lack of community organizing makes things extremely difficult to handle, and short-term results are difficult to materialize. Finally, other actors also see unions as an essential link towards the formation of race and class coalitions for mobilization purposes.

In addition to the local chapters of the AFL-CIO, and the SEIU, other union organizations that are directly or indirectly related to mobilization efforts of undocumented workers are, in Houston: Harris County AFL-CIO Council; Sheet Metal Workers International Association – Houston Project; United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 551; United Food and Commercial Workers International Union; Meatcutters and Allied Food Workers District, Local 408. In Chicago: United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Local 881; Chicago Federation of Labor; and UNITE.

Chambers of Commerce and Civic Organizations

Mexican American chambers of commerce limit their participation in the process to meetings with the Mexican consulate in which the legalization and workers right issues are sporadically mentioned. Mexican-immigrant chambers of commerce are not only related to the process via the Mexican Consulate, but they are seen as a potential tool to

introduce the immigrant business community into the process. Civic associations like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund limit their participation to their respective fields of action, through its legal program in Chicago, and its program in Community Educational Leadership Development in Houston. Other organizations, like the National Council of La Raza or the League of United Latin American Citizens have participated in public acts related to the cause, mostly since a recent rapprochement with president Fox. In any case, the participation of chambers of commerce and civic organizations, in terms of mobilization, is generally marginal.

Mexican State Federations

Mexican state federations are organizations that group mostly hometown associations. Mexican state federations are the big question mark in the process of mobilization. Low in numbers and influence in Houston, but mushrooming in Chicago, other actors see these organizations as natural allies in the campaign for legalization and workers rights. They always refer to them in terms of their mobilization potential, and some leaders introduce their organizations in these terms, asserting that they represent thousands and thousands of members of their community of origin living in Chicago.

The most important state federations in Chicago are: Durango Unido en Chicago, Casa Guanajuato en Chicago, Federación de Guerrerenses en Chicago, Federación de Clubes Jaliscienses del Medio Oeste (FEDEJAL), Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois (FEDECMI), Federación de Oaxaqueños del Medio Oeste, Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas del Estado de Illinois (ACOPIL), Federación de Clubes Unidos Zacatecanos en Illinois, Federación Chihuahuense en Illinois, and Hidalguenses Unidos de Illinois. The first steps to create a macro organization that would group most state federations, the Confederación de Federaciones y Asociaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste, were given in early 2003. In Houston, only the Federación of Zacatecanos has survived. Attempts to create other federations have systematically failed in the Houston area. The majority of these organizations were founded during the 1990's.

In general terms, Mexican state federations in Chicago and Houston have an office in which mostly voluntary personnel work full or part-time. They have an annual budget,

their own by-laws, and a directory of members. Membership is defined in two different ways, by the number of hometown associations or committees, and by their capacity of mobilization. The range in number of committees that may form a state federation in these cities currently goes from 5 to 30 units, however, this is a very relative parameter, because sometimes a big number does not mean much in terms of organization and mobilization capacity.

For example, in accordance of Frank De Ávila, the president of COMMO in Chicago, and former president of ACOFIL, “within a federation of 25 committees, you may have 15 committees which are ‘active,’ and from those active committees you may have 7 which are really ‘active-active.’” On the other hand, a small number of committees may be able to mobilize one, two or three thousand people in a relatively short period of time. The range of mobilization of these organizations may be measured in individuals or in families, and it goes from 100 to 3,600 individuals, and/or from 40 to 800 families.

The most important feature regarding membership is that the regular constituency for the meetings of the state federations is made of presidents of hometown associations, who are seen extremely active individuals when the need for mobilization arises.

Members generally meet once per month, and use to take decisions in a democratic manner with the “fifty percent plus one” rule. In some federations, reelection of the president and/or board of directors is allowed, whereas others prohibit it. Elections take place each one or two years. In most cases each hometown association handles its own agenda regarding the type of project to be accomplished in a specific community in Mexico, whereas the state federation deals mostly with the Mexican government at a state and federal level in order to facilitate the achievement of such projects, or to promote major, state-level, projects.

Regarding their local constituency, state federations in Chicago and Houston organize social and cultural events that are open to the Mexican community and the public in general. Most federations organize an annual ball and a beauty pageant. The election of a queen in these balls is seen not only as a social event, but also as a way to approach younger, second-generation, constituents. First-generation Mexican immigrants who are formally established in the United States generally form the membership and leadership in state federations. They assert that the main sources of legitimacy and empowerment of their organizations are: (1) the high levels of autonomy from the Mexican state, (2)

the fact that they do deliver in a consistent manner, (3) the voluntary nature of the organization, and (4) the official recognition of their organizations by different levels of the Mexican government.

One of the main purposes of the state federations is to deal directly with their respective state governments in Mexico in order to increase the volume of transferred resources to the homeland, and make such transfers more effective and efficient, with the aim to enhance the living conditions of their communities of origin in Mexico. Some state federations have been extremely successful on the matter, while others have not.

However, their involvement in local politics is seen as imminent, and indeed it is already happening in Chicago: some leaders express publicly their support for union efforts regarding legalization, and others have been called on to testify before the city council on behalf of the community when dealing with official matters like the recognition of the consular ID (Matricula Consular) as an official ID in the city of Chicago. Some federations have had introductory meetings with the recently formed Hispanic Caucus of the Illinois Congress. Other federations take an active role in forming coalitions that deal simultaneously with Mexican and local politics: they organize a rally to celebrate the second year of Fox's arrival to power, and local candidates that are running for aldermanic or legislative posts attend the event, and even participate as speakers. For state federations, socialization at the elite level is the starting point to participate in politics. However, in terms of mobilization, the leadership of the state federations is extremely cautious in getting committed to any specific activity.

Media

Main actors see the role of the local Hispanic media from three perspectives. Firstly, most actors agree that the media is a business after all, and that they will report whatever they need to report in order to keep themselves profitable and competitive in the market. However, community organizations and unions generally report good relations with the Hispanic media (mostly printed media and TV) in both cities, and this opinion will be held as far as their activities are routinely and fairly covered. Almost all actors agree that the current state of the affairs in radio in both cities is a total disgrace

in terms of their programming, and they underline the relative lack of radio space to address community issues in a serious manner.

Secondly, media is seen as an essential tool to mobilize people, and its potential is perceived as not yet fully developed, specially the radio. However, local Hispanic television news (Telemundo and Univision) is seen as an essential factor to familiarize the immigrant community with itself, and to make them aware of the problems that they share in common, regardless of their migratory status and generational barriers.

Thirdly, most actors see the urgency to go beyond the exclusive diffusion of the Latino community's issues by the Hispanic media, and to introduce the mainstream Anglo media into the Latino reality of these two cities. The fact that the major Anglo newspapers in both cities had recently bought the most important local Hispanic weekly newspapers raises concerns and hopes among actors. On the one hand, some actors are concerned about the potential influence of a newspaper's Anglo-dominated board of directors on the diffusion of the Latino reality to Latinos themselves. On the other hand, some actors see this as a good starting point to sensitize the Anglo-dominated mainstream media into Latinos' reality, and the potential diffusion of that reality between Anglo and Black readers in both cities.

Regarding printed media, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Houston Chronicle* have recently begun considering immigrant-related news as an issue on its own, in addition to the use of the traditional "Hispanic" umbrella when referring to issues of the Spanish speaking community in both cities.

The most important Hispanic printed media in Chicago are: *La Raza*, *¡Exito!* (*Chicago Tribune's*), *Nuevo Siglo*, *El Viento de Chicago*, *El Imparcial*, *El Otro*, *Extra*, *Chicago Ahora*, *La Esperanza* (formerly known as *La Adelita*, the publication of the Centro Legal Sin Fronteras), *Nueva Vida* (The Resurrection Project's), *Enlace* (Mexican Consulate's), *Chicago Católico* (the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago), *Vision 2000* (Elgin), *Back of the Yards Journal*, and *Vida Nacional* (Melrose Park).

In Houston: *El Día*, *Semana News*, *La Voz de Houston* (*Houston Chronicle's*), *El Mexica*, *Ultimas Noticias*, *La Prensa de Houston*, *Caminantes* (Hispanic Ministry, Diocese of Galveston-Houston), *Catholic Worker* (Casa Juan Diego's), *El Misionero*

(Interfaith newspaper), *The Texas Catholic Herald* (the official newspaper of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston), *La Información*, *Rumores*, and *¡Qué Onda! Magazine*.

The majority of these publications appear on a weekly or monthly basis, some are bilingual, but most of them are published in Spanish. Also, the majority focus on local and/or community issues, and almost all of them offer news or analysis related to Mexican and/or Latin American politics. Some Mexican state federations also publish their own magazines.

The Mexican Consulate

The Mexican consulate in these two cities generally is seen as an ally and/or a target, depending on the actor-source, the timing, and the issue that is being addressed. In general terms, the Mexican consulate in Chicago deals more frequently and intensively with an organized community than its counterpart in Houston. In Chicago, the state federations, and a set of local coalitions (which, depending on the coalition, may include some or most of the following: community-based organizations, religious-based organizations, chambers of commerce, activists from the Mexican left, and representatives of Mexican political parties), regularly exert pressure on the community agenda of the consulate. In Houston this pressure is sporadically exerted by community-based organizations, and issue-driven alliances.

Before the arrival of Vicente Fox to the presidency, the leadership in these two cities used to consider the Mexican consulate as an extension of the “PRI-government,” and lack of trust was the dominant note in their relationship. After Fox became president, the Mexican consulates were perceived mainly as representatives of the Mexican government, which has given the consulate a major margin of action to earn the confidence of the local leadership. In both cities the relationship between the consulates and the community leadership is based on strategic calculations, and an intense pragmatism.

Additionally, the community leadership in both cities does pay attention to the personality of the Consul General. They point out, in general terms, that there are two types of consuls, those who care about the community, and those who do not. From this perspective, the personality of the Consul General makes the difference most of the

time. In Houston, regardless of the consul type, leaders tend to “cohabit” with the consul, or they both exert mutual indifference on each other. While the cohabitation scheme also applies to Chicago, there is no way to think in a relationship of mutual indifference. Indeed, the Mexican consul frequently needs to adapt his agenda to the dynamics imposed by the proactive social and political life of the Mexican community in Chicago.

Mexican Politics in Chicago and Houston

In accordance to Juan Andrés Mora, a self-defined Mexican political operator in Chicago, Mexicans that migrate to the Windy City are not only workers, some of them are also members of different political parties and organizations in Mexico, and they do like the idea of exerting their political views in the local context. Besides Chicago, only in Los Angeles is possible to find so much passion among Mexican immigrants for Mexican politics. However, the Mexican political elite in Chicago is extremely pragmatic, in 1988 and 1994 Chicago was considered a secure stronghold for Cardenismo, whereas in 2000 it was considered a location that strongly supported Fox in the presidential elections.

The three most important Mexican political parties have some presence in Chicago’s Mexican politics. The Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) is the best organized, and their members tend to be very influential with other community organizations or coalitions. The Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) practically started its activities in Chicago right after the victory of Fox in the presidential elections through the grouping of its representatives in Pro-PAN Illinois. However, their level of activity and presence in the city is qualified as modest by some, or extremely discrete by others. Finally you have the “priistas” from the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) who had never been officially represented as such in the city, and they give the impression that their level of activity does not go beyond café reunions or the sporadic organization of forums and conferences.

In general terms we can say that in Chicago every Mexican has something to say about politics and political parties in Mexico. However, the leaders that openly identify themselves with any political party are more the exception than the rule among the local

Mexican leadership, and the capacity of mobilization on their own is considered by other activists as close to null. Moreover, Mexican political activists and operators who work with Mexican immigrants prefer to identify themselves (or are identified by others) with left (mainly Zapatista ideology), right, center, or ‘opposition-to-the-Mexican-government’ political positions, more than with a specific Mexican political party.

The above mentioned pragmatism is also reflected in organizations like the Mexican state federations. Before the arrival of Fox to the presidency, some of them were identified with the PRD (however, this does not mean that they were really perredistas), but most of them would gladly wave the opposition flag in practically any matter in which the Mexican Consulate or the Mexican government had something to do or say. After Fox became president, some state federations dropped the flag at the beginning of the sexenio, half because of a ‘wait-and-see’ attitude and half because they suddenly ran out of the traditional opposition speech against 70 years of PRI-government. Some state federations openly support the Mexican government under Fox, some do not, but no clear signs of an organized or systematic opposition have emerged. State federations are definitely more interested in politics and political parties at a state level in Mexico.

In Houston, none of this exists.

In Chicago there are two organizations that have strongly made their point (at the local and national levels) about Mexicans’ right to exert their electoral rights from abroad. The Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME), and the Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago). Leadership for both organizations is strongly identified with the PRD and/or the Mexican left.

The CDPME is founded on December 1, 2001. However, in accordance to one of its founders, Raul Ross, the origin of this group goes back to 1998, with the formation of the “Coalición de Mexicanos en el Exterior Nuestro Voto en el 2000” during a meeting of migrant delegates in Mexico City, who were there to lobby for the vote of Mexicans living abroad. Ross was the head of the AFSC’s program “The Mexican Agenda” from 1992 to 2001.

The main objective of the CDPME is to reclaim and take back the electoral rights of Mexicans living abroad, 95% of them reside in the United States. Their most recent proposal on the matter was presented on April 2003 to the Mexican Legislative and Executive powers, and the electoral authorities (Instituto Federal Electoral). This proposal is by far the most complete of its kind and, more remarkable, it is the first proposal in which Mexican immigrants in the United States (mostly elites: leadership of a wide range of community organizations, hometown associations, state federations, chambers of commerce, Mexican American associations; and even university scholars from Canada, Mexico and the United States) are mobilized to post their signature on the document at a national level.

The CIME was founded on February 2000 in Dallas, as a direct result of the Mexican government's failed attempt to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico. However, after its second national convention in Chicago, on August 2000, the organization splits into CIME and AIME (Asociación Internacional de Mexicanos en el Extranjero). In real terms, what happened was that the Chicago section of the group took control over the Dallas group, and AIME ended up its existence shortly after the split. One of the heads of AIME, later on became a member of the Advisory Council of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (AC-IMA), in the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

CIME-Chicago is a political organization that has developed a multi-set of activities that go from taking passport pictures outside the mobile Mexican Consulates in the Chicago suburbs, to the PRD-CIME co-sponsored presentation of the "Sexta Circunscripción," which is a proposal presented to the Mexican Congress on October 2001. In this proposal, in accordance to one of its founders, Jorge Mújica, the idea is that Mexicans living abroad would be able to vote and elect their own representatives, and these representatives, representing the district of Mexicans abroad or the Sexta Circunscripción, would become part of the Legislative chambers with full membership rights. CIME also has a branch in Houston. In both cities, CIME generally depends on the structure of other organizations to mobilize people, however, mobilization on grounds of defending the electoral rights of Mexicans abroad can hardly be considered an issue in both cities.

Both organizations, CDPME and CIME-Chicago, count with their respective internet discussion groups, which have become an intensive political forum of discussion on several matters that affect immigrants' lives. In cyberspace, though, great emphasis is put on the struggle for Mexicans living abroad to exert their electoral rights, as stated by the Mexican constitution in 1996.

American Politicians and Local Governments

American politicians are initially considered as targets in the struggle for legalization and workers rights, for the simple reason that they can modify the laws that directly affect the life of millions of undocumented immigrants. However, some politicians, depending on the issue, can also be considered as allies. In general terms, activists in both cities face a difficult decision regarding what kind of politicians to target. On the one hand, they know that for legalization issues the members of the Congress and Senate are preferred targets, yet, the effectiveness of their mobilization efforts towards these targets depends on the national mood of the whole US legislative branch. This requires a national coordination of actions that not only has not happened yet, but that is also difficult to put together.

On the other hand, activists try to exert influence on local politicians in dealing with local and state issues, like workers rights, education related issues, or getting drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants. Targeting local and state politicians for local issues on regular basis has brought the necessary experience for some activists to deal with US politicians at a national level. Nevertheless, a clear strategy to involve local and state politicians (and governors and mayors) to advocate for the legalization of undocumented immigrants has yet to emerge. The interesting thing about this is that most local and state politicians in Houston and Chicago, who deal with immigrant issues on regular basis, are already expecting the move, and some have firmly expressed their support to form part of such an effort. For the moment, it seems that efforts in this sense are being directed towards committing current candidates at every level of local and state elections, including candidates for governor.

In Chicago, community based organizations form part of local and state-wide coalitions and, when trying to solve a problem in their community, they tend to deal first with

their respective alderman, then with their respective state representative and/or senator. In Houston, community-based organizations mostly form part of state-wide coalitions and, until very recently, whenever dealing with local issues they consider the Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA) as a useful resource for solving certain problems. Interestingly enough, the MOIRA office was modeled after its counterpart in Chicago during Harold Washington's mayoral period. Union activists and community-based activists are well connected and quite familiar with Democratic politicians and politics state-wide, whereas their counterparts in Chicago tend to focus more on local aldermen first. In both cities, activists spend an important part of their energy targeting their respective US representative and senators. Some activists identify several members of the US legislative body as allies or sympathizers in their struggle.

Transnational Politics in Houston and Chicago: The Processes

In this section, based on the Mexican immigrant experience in Chicago and Houston, I expose an organizational approach of transnational politics, and lay emphasis on the role of the Mexican and American states (focusing mostly on local, state, and federal governments) in the process. Firstly, this research states that the essence of transnational politics is highly related to the agenda setting process of the organizations that deal with immigrant issues, and I address the matter from two perspectives: the organization's own agenda, and the broader agenda that is created through the interaction of all relevant actors, institutions, and organizations. Secondly, I address the role of globalization politics and policies in the process of elite formation among immigrants. Finally, I point out the importance of the influence of local politics and policies in the formation and consolidation of transnational politics from an organizational standpoint, and the importance of institutionalizing organizational and mobilization efforts.

The Essence of Transnational Politics: The Agenda

In transnational terms, and always from an organizational standpoint, we can address the process of agenda setting from two different perspectives. At the first level we have the agenda of each intervening organization that might get involved in transnational actions from different sorts. At a higher level we have a transnational agenda that is

implicitly formed by the whole set of interactions between local and transnational actors within a city.

This means that all these intervening organizations are part of a system that deals with the problems of the immigrant community within a transnational framework, even if some of these organizations have very few elements to consider their agendas as transnational. Basically the agenda that deals with immigrants' issues through the consideration of elements from local and Mexican origin (from the "here and there") is considered a transnational agenda. Organizations or institutions that have heavily transnational agendas are the church, the Mexican Consulate, and the Mexican state federations.

The church has earned the trust of the immigrant community through the periodic celebration of Catholic rituals that are quite similar, if not identical, to those celebrated back in the immigrants' places of origin. Symbols like the Virgin (of Guadalupe), the Mexican flag, and the priest are basic tools of communication, potential mobilization, and de facto organization of the Mexican community as a whole (Cano 2004). Events that take place in Mexico, like the Zapatista Movement in 1994, affect the relationship between the church and its constituency, and between the church and other actors. In this case, the relationship between the church and the Mexican Consulate practically froze and, in terms of trust, it took several years to rebuild the relationship.

The Mexican Consulate's agenda is fully transnational in the sense that its personnel has to deal with the every-day issues of the Mexican community, firstly, through the consideration of the basic lines of action that are disposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In recent years, these lines of action generally are the product of a strong dilemma of priorities: either the Mexican government gives priority to the relationship with its immigrant community, or it gives priority to the bilateral relations with the American government. Depending on the issue, there are signs that, whenever possible, the Mexican government will give priority to its immigrant community, like the creation and lobbying efforts to validate, with local and state authorities, the *Matrícula Consular* (Mexican Consulate's ID for Mexican nationals). On the other side, lobbying towards the massive legalization of Mexican immigrants is clearly a second-level priority that obeys mostly to the political timing of federal politics and policies in the United States.

Secondly, the Mexican Consulate, when dealing with the issues of the Mexican community, has to consider the potential and *de facto* interaction with local and state authorities. This basically depends on the ups and downs of the local and state agendas, when dealing with the immigrant community. In Houston, dealing with the death penalty is an important component of the agenda of the Mexican Consulate towards local and state authorities. In Chicago, local politics deal, among other things, with a prosperous generation of successful first generation Mexican immigrants whose businesses represent important sources of tax income to local authorities. In this sense, Mexican Consulates in Chicago and Houston count with different political clouts whenever they approach local and state authorities for whatever the purpose.

Mexican state federations are important actors recognized by both, local and Mexican authorities. Their agenda tends to consider issues from both sides of the border and, most important of all, a double agenda is considered a survival strategy for the majority of these organizations. They do care about political and economic actions of their homeland authorities, mostly at a state level; they do care about their –political, social, and economic- relationship with local authorities; and some of them really do care about what can be done to solve the community’s problems that they assert they represent. In organizational terms, some of these organizations are extremely well developed, and have survived complex democratic change-of-command schemes. Regarding mobilization, their capacity is always expressed in potential terms. The big question mark regarding state federations is to what extent all these relations with local and Mexican authorities offer tangible benefits to the immigrant community as a whole.

The issue itself also becomes an important component of the transnational context. For example, in Chicago, the struggle for Mexicans to vote abroad is an important issue, whereas in Houston it is hardly considered an issue. In accordance to Joel Magallán, from Asociación Tepeyac in New York, one of the main obstacles, for the Chicago immigrant leadership to accomplish tangible positive actions towards its local immigrant constituency, is precisely the separation in human, economic and intellectual resources that has caused the decision of some leaders to push for the vote of Mexicans abroad, instead of launching a national campaign for the legalization of the undocumented.

In Houston, depending on the issue, coalitions of immigrant organizations are created and/or destroyed. Immigrant organization and mobilization in the area is strongly issue-based, in accordance to María Jiménez (former AFSC activist). Indeed, service providers, government-sponsored institutions, and the Catholic Church tend to establish the immigrant agenda through the flow of grants and monies that are assigned for specific projects/issues. This is one of the main reasons for which organizations and coalitions are easy to form, but extremely hard to consolidate. At this point, the capacity of financial independence for most organizations and/or coalitions to lead the agenda is low.

However, the capacity of setting a transnational agenda 'step by step' in Houston is actually occurring through the involvement of Mexican authorities (and not only the Mexican Consulate) in processes and activities that local authorities are interested in. Activities like official visits of Mexican politicians to discuss the problems of the immigrant community have led to important lobbying actions between local and immigration authorities, and the local immigrant leadership, that have been translated into specific tangible benefits to the members of grassroots organizations like ARCA.

Finally, we have the interaction generated by all the organizations that deal with immigrant issues in their everyday struggle. In Houston, the AFSC, right until its last day of duty, and the Catholic Campaign of Human Development, were both very efficient promoters of immigrant organization and mobilization. Their hands were felt in the formation of several coalitions (though not in their consolidation), and immigrant organizations. They certainly emphasized in the need for new organizations to be financially independent in order to become permanently successful.

In Chicago, the universe of interactions is way more complicated. Organizations like Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Heartland Alliance, Erie Neighborhood House, Casa Aztlán, Unión Latina, West Town Leadership United, COMMO, ICIRR, the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, the Resurrection Project, the Chicago Interfaith Committee, the CDPME, and the CIME, to mention the most important, form a complex web of transnational actions that determine a transnational agenda as a whole. Indeed, this agenda is constantly modified, mostly in terms of the interactive relationship of these organizations with local or state authorities, and with the Mexican Consulate and/or Mexican authorities and politicians.

Chicago and Houston both count with transnational agendas at the organization-basis and aggregate levels. At the core of these agendas is the interaction between their transnational and local components, and this interaction becomes the essence of transnational politics in these two cities. The aim to deal with the problems that Mexicans immigrants face during their stay as an important component of the local labor force is the fuel that feeds this huge transnational political engine.

Elite Formation among Immigrants: The Hands of Globalization

The process of political transnationalism is also an important component of the structural analysis of power within a macro context, a context of globalization. One of the long term goals of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, January 1, 1994) was to generate enough jobs in Mexico through local and foreign investment in order to deter migration flows of Mexican laborers into the United States.

On the American side, additionally, the ‘Southwest Border Strategy’ was launched by the Clinton administration in the mid-nineties. The strategy ”treats the entire border as a single, seamless entity,” and “specifically calls for ‘prevention through deterrence,’ (with the aim of) elevating the risk of apprehension to a level so high that prospective illegal entrants would consider it futile to attempt to enter the U.S. illegally.”²⁷ The strategy is formed by Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego (established in 1994), Operation Hold the Line in El Paso (1993), Operation Rio Grande in McAllen (1997), and Operation Safeguard in Tucson (1995).

After 10 years, almost nothing has changed, and what has changed, has changed for the worst. Mexicans keep on emigrating for economic reasons. Levels and flows of foreign investment in Mexico have not reached its theoretical optimum, and an average of one undocumented immigrant dies per day in his/her attempt to cross the border through the desert, nonetheless, the flow of successful attempts of trespassing the border by undocumented aliens have gone up from 750 persons per day, to approximately 1,000 persons per day.²⁸

²⁷ Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. The National Border Patrol Strategy. <http://www.immigration.gov/graphics/shared/lawenfor/bpatrol/strategy.htm>

²⁸ For the period 1990-2003, in accordance to data from the Mexican Population Council, and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

However, organizations that deal with immigrant issues in the U.S. are by no means on the scene just by chance. They are a direct product of a set of macro economic and political conditions. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) produced a new generation of Mexican immigrants in the United States. The immigrants who were benefited by the amnesty started to trust, and to get incorporated into, the economic and financial system to the extent that they began buying properties, and started to invest their capital in US-established businesses, from taco shops to jewelries, and from furniture stores to construction business. They invest in their children's education too. Since then, no other amnesty of that type has taken place. Through that period of time, those immigrants have become a political and financial elite within the Mexican community who lives and works in the U.S.

This elite started to consolidate hometown associations, and to form state federations (most of these with the assistance of Mexican Consulates), and Mexican-business' chambers of commerce. In the U.S. this elite gets systematically related with local and state politicians, while in Mexico they get related with Mexican state governors, local politicians, and members of the Mexican Congress. At the end of the day, this elite has a strong voice about what is best for the Mexican community as a whole.

Globalization has not worked as expected, and this has generated a whole new generation of transnational politicians and leaders. In theory (this is, neoliberal theory), globalization rationale points out that the higher the levels of invested capital in Mexico, the higher the levels of employment in Mexico, and the lower the levels of low-skilled Mexican immigration to the U.S. The model would be reinforced in the short and mid-terms through a bold strategy to 'persuade' undocumented aliens to abstain from trespassing the southern border of the U.S.

A reality check says the following: in the aggregate, no higher levels of productive investments have been produced by NAFTA in Mexico, at least for employment purposes in real terms. And things are getting worst: at this point, not only the huge difference between U.S. and Mexican real wages is the main incentive for immigration to occur (in a range that goes from 7 to 1, up to 11 to 1, depending on the sector of the economy), but also the growing rates of unemployment are expected to play, in the near future, an important role in the migration process as well.

Nevertheless, the reality check also points out that the accumulation of Mexican capital that gets established in U.S. soil is real and has two visible effects. First, this capital accumulation is a direct response to a growing 'Latino' market in the U.S., and expectations are that the accumulation will keep on growing. Second, this capital accumulation has created not only an uniform elite, but several elites, among Mexican immigrants, mostly as a product of the 1986 amnesty. These elites differ from each other, depending on several factors, like the place of origin in their homeland, the American city in which they are established, their level of education, and the type of business that they develop. The common factor among them is their transnational behavior: these elites have a growing interest in getting involved (and they are already getting involved) in U.S. local and state politics (national levels coming soon), and they are definitely involved in Mexican politics at different levels.

These elites also plan to invest in Mexico; however, it seems that major levels of capital accumulation are needed to carry on significant enterprises. In the meantime, business, activist, and intellectual elites dedicate most of their time in criticizing the Mexican government from every possible angle, in asking for the right to vote for Mexicans living abroad, and in influencing the rules of the game of local and state Mexican elections. Interestingly enough, only a small minority of these elites actually do any community work to enhance the lives of approximately 4-5 millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants who live and work in the U.S.

In Chicago, right after the 1986 Amnesty, the Mexican immigrant elite started to consolidate its financial, social and political positions, to the extent that they are currently recognized by local and Mexican authorities as an example of successful case of economic integration of an immigrant group. In Houston, this successful elite is mostly formed by Mexican Americans and Mexican businessman. Mexican immigrant leadership in Houston tends not to get involved in business. One of the main reasons is the lack of continuity in their residence in the city. Most Mexican immigrants use Houston as a port of entry and transit, whereas immigrants in Chicago arrive to the city generally as the last stop in their search for a better life.

The Local Influence: Non Electoral Politics

Chicago and Houston's local authorities have started a process of political incorporation of Mexican immigrants into their political systems. This process takes place within a framework of political mobilization in nonelectoral politics. However, the effect of this process is quite different in each city. In general terms, in Chicago, Mexicans are highly conscious of their potential force as an ethnic group within city politics. The issue is not about being "Latinos" or "Hispanics," but about finding the most efficient way to exert their "Mexicanness." In Houston, and all over Texas, assimilation processes into mainstream, pan-ethnic political incorporation, is definitely the name of the game. In both cities, transnational politics are highly influenced by local politics.

Mobilization efforts of Mexican immigrants in Chicago have been linked more to the Mexican government's organizing efforts in the U.S., and to ethnic machine politics in the city. Mobilization efforts of Mexican immigrants in Houston have been less linked to the Mexican government's efforts and, to a certain extent, more linked to mainstream, 'Anglo' assimilatory processes of political incorporation. Mexican immigrants in Chicago are experiencing a process of segmented assimilation, and expectations are that full political incorporation of Mexican immigrants can be reached through a major legalization of undocumented immigrants. In any case, most actors consider that political mobilization of Mexican immigrants is already a way of incorporating this population into the political system of the city.

In Chicago, machine politics is an essential factor in understanding the political incorporation of minorities by the local political system. Although Mexicans generally have been considered the last of the "major-league players" in the process, the political structure of the city in the last fifty years has shaped their slow integration into local politics. Moreover, Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the country, and this is pointed out as a potential source of strength for political mobilization of an immigrant group.

The majority of Chicagoans have lived in neighborhoods with strictly delineated *de facto* borders, giving the inhabitants and each neighborhood an impression of being permanently isolated from the rest of the city. Such isolation enhances nationalist feelings and group consciousness among ethnic groups whenever the community has to solve a problem. This leaves the doors open in developing a process of segmented

political assimilation, as ethnic community leaders use to deal with their community-neighborhood problems by consulting their options first with their respective aldermen. In theory this works if the alderman shares the ethnic identity of their constituency, although this is not always the case, and even if it would be the case, the fact that the alderman has a Mexican-origin ethnic background “does not mean that the results will always favor the interest of the Mexican community,” in accordance to PILNE’s Teresa Fraga.

In Houston, assimilatory tendencies work straight forward, with practically no middle-of-the-road points in the process. Although legalization is also seen as an essential component in the process of political incorporation, it seems that Mexicans get involved in a winner-takes-all dynamic, in which the winner goes from being a Mexican immigrant to becoming a U.S. (Latino or Hispanic) citizen who lives in Texas, and then the individual is incorporated into political life. This generally happens with second generation immigrants. There is no hard evidence about systematic or institutionalized processes of political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Houston. Low levels of political mobilization among Mexican immigrants have led to low levels of political incorporation and participation. In Texas, citizenship does matter.

However, things are changing in Houston. On the one hand, some local politicians, like Council Member Gordon Quan, consider that regardless of their citizenship status, Mexican immigrants are already “citizens of the city.” They represent more than ten percent of the total population, and they are a component of the city’s economy that cannot and should not be ignored. They represent tax revenues for the city and the state, and they require the most elemental services from the city as well. From this perspective, mainstream local politicians can no longer afford to ignore the presence of Mexican immigrants, mostly when it comes to the allocation of city resources in order to address their constituency’s needs.

On the other hand, recent organizational and mobilization efforts among immigrants in Houston have proved to be extremely successful at a local level. ARCA’s ingenious dealings with the former INS regarding late amnesty cases, and the Coalition for Higher Education for Immigrant Students’ efforts to grant higher education to the immigrant population, are examples reinforcing the idea that through the process of nonelectoral mobilization, political incorporation is definitely a reachable goal for noncitizens in

Texas. Through the whole process of mobilizing and organizing immigrants in order to reach their objectives, the leadership of these organizations has built strong links with local, state, and national level politicians. They single out these links as essential in accomplishing their aims, although they also point out that hardly anything can be done without a good mobilization plan, and well developed organizational skills.

Finally, in both cities, the interaction between local and transnational actors at an organizational level determines not only the agenda, but also different levels of empowerment of the community. In Chicago, the relationship of the immigrant leadership with local politicians, Mexican state governments, and the Mexican Consulate gives them credibility with other players, and allows them to become active players in terms of defending the community's interests in every possible arena. Leadership in Houston has learned to relate to Mexican politicians and Consular functionaries in order to attract the attention of local politicians and mass media, and try to commit both of them in activities that might empower the community as a whole. The lack of institutionalization of these efforts in Houston is one of the main components that differentiate it with places like Chicago and Los Angeles.

Final Remarks

It is important to specify that the above mentioned processes are not the only ones that give shape to transnational politics in Chicago and Houston. Agenda setting, the elite formation process, and the influence of local politics and policies in organizational immigrant activities, gives us a solid idea about what the process is about as a whole. However, elite formation process do not fully explain leadership formation and consolidation in these two cities; and the fact that local governments might switch policies and/or politicians in power, will always leave the door open for new interpretations on the matter.

Moreover, one of the related-processes that presents an enormous potential of study is the interaction between the local and state American political institutions and actors, and the Mexican government, through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IMA), at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The IMA is the direct product of a new Mexican government's effort to approach Mexican communities living and working outside its

territorial borders. The IMA is also the only transnational institution, properly speaking, within the Mexican government that exerts an agenda in both sides of the border, and it was designed to incorporate Mexican emigrant communities into the process of Mexican government's policy-making.

The IMA's main goal is the creation of permanent state policies that affect in a positive way Mexico's emigrant population, through the consideration of all the involved actors in their formulation: Mexican organizations in the U.S., Latino organizations, state and local American governments, Mexican government agencies, Mexican and American scholars, etc. (González Gutiérrez 2003) Indeed, the IMA has already started to contact local and state American elected officials and government functionaries through its program of Informative Journeys, which informs these functionaries about what the Mexican government has to offer to its target population outside its borders.

From a theoretical standpoint, political transnationalism, and for this purpose any other kind of transnationalism, differentiates itself from the concept of 'plain' transnationalism in several aspects. The most important has to do with the unit of analysis at the core of the research, and its methodology. Anthropologists and sociologists, might feel more comfortable in dealing with the individual, the family, or society; political scientists might do the same with political institutions and organizations, and nation-states; economists dealing with a global perspective of the problem; and historians dealing with all of the above. Or they might not, opening the doors to interdisciplinary research on transnationalism, paradoxically reinforcing the concept of a broader transnationalism.

In any instance, this is the beauty of the term: it can be developed through imagined disciplinary borders, but in essence is an open invitation to creative, solid, and provocative research, the ideal combination to enhance progress in the social sciences.

The research presented in this paper suggests that transnational politics in American cities are the core subject of the study of political transnationalism at an organizational meso-level in American politics. The essence of political transnationalism is the interaction between local and transnational actors at an organized, institutional, governmental level; and that the agenda, the formation process of immigrant elites-leadership, and the local authorities' influence within a context of non-electoral politics,

are the starting points in order to explain the causes and effects of transnational activities, and the potential empowerment of the immigrant community.

Political transnationalism can work as a unit of interpretation for the same phenomenon, at least from intermediate and macro perspectives. It is probable that survey research might improve the chances of political transnationalism to grow in a 'micro' direction. However, the first problem to overcome is the fact that nobody knows the precise size of the universe, this being the number of undocumented aliens working and living in the U.S.

From an empirical perspective, the study of political organizations that behave in a transnational manner is challenging because it forces researchers to question if the result of their research is indicative of the existence of a transnational community, a transnational society, or a transnational polity; or a combination of them.

Finally, the structure and results of the present research places itself within the mainstream research of political transnationalism (**tables 1 and 2**): it considers the role of the nation-state in the process as one of its main subjects of study, and its results fall within the transnational fields of globalization, transnational politics, transnational communities, transnational relations, and the process of transnationalization as a whole.

This is political transnationalism at its best...

List of Interviews

- **Arango, Carlos**, *Casa Aztlán*, Chicago. (5/29/02)
- **Argüelles, Pancho**, *National Organizers Alliance (NOA)*, Houston. (3/14/02; 3/19/02)
- **Bermea, Francisco**, *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (3/1/02)
- **Buj Flores, Enrique**, *Mexican Consulate*, Houston. (2/22/02)
- **Cadena, Adriana**, *Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFL-CIO, CLC*, Houston. (3/6/02; 3/10/02; 3/30/02; 6/11/02)
- **Cárdenas, José**, *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (3/1/02)
- **Cervantes, Salvador**, *The Resurrection Project*, Chicago. (4/30/02)
- **Chacon, Oscar**, *Heartland Alliance, International Program*, Chicago. (5/13/02)
- **Coleman, Walter (Rev.)**, *UMC-Iglesia Adalberto, Centro Sin Fronteras*, Chicago. (5/17/02)
- **Dahm, Charles (Padre)**, *St. Pious V, Pilsen*, Chicago. (7/3/02)
- **De Ávila, Frank**, *Coordinación de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO)*, Chicago. (4/29/02)
- **De la Cruz, Roberto**, *Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFL-CIO, CLC*, Chicago. (5/18/02)
- **Delgado, Jorge**, *Office of Hispanic Ministry, Diocese of Galveston-Houston*, Houston. (3/18/02)
- **Díaz, José**, *Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en el Exterior (FEDECMI)*, Chicago. (5/15/02)
- **Feliciano-Jones, Jeannette**, *Advisory Council on Latino Affairs, City of Chicago, Commission on Latino Affairs*, Chicago. (4/25/02)
- **Fernández, Adriana**, *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (6/18/02)
- **Fraga, Teresa**, *Pilsen Neighbors Community Council*, Chicago. (5/28/02; 7/10/02).
- **García, Jesús G.**, *Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC)*, Chicago. (5/7/02)
- **Gómez, Dante**, *Mexican Consulate*, Chicago. (4/26/02; 5/22/02)
- **Gutiérrez, José Luis**, *Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en el Exterior (FEDECMI)*, Chicago. (5/5/02)
- **Hinojosa, Cristóbal**, *Mexicanos en Acción*, Houston. (3/8/02)
- **Jiménez, María**, *American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)*, Houston. (2/15/02; 3/26/02; 6/18/02)
- **Juárez, Benito**, *Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA), City of Houston*, Houston. (3/1/02; 3/29/02; 6/7/02)
- **Lozano, Emma**, *Centro Legal Sin Fronteras*, Chicago. (5/28/02; 7/25/02)
- **Lusk, Rebekah**, *Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)*, Chicago. (5/23/02).

- **Magallán, Joel**, *Asociación Tepeyac*, New York City. (4/2/02)
- **Martínez, Higinio**, *Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME)*, Houston. (3/16/02)
- **Martínez, Manuel**, *Federación Guerrero*, Chicago. (5/10/02)
- **Martínez, Raúl** (Padre), *Holy Family Parish*, Waukegan, Ill. (5/26/02; 7/7/02)
- **Miranda, César**, *Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME)*, Chicago. (5/7/02; 7/1/02)
- **Mora, Juan A.**, *Operador Político*, Chicago. (4/24/02)
- **Mora, Omar**, *Pro-PAN Illinois*, Chicago. (5/25/02)
- **Mújica, Jorge**, *Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME)*, Chicago. (7/3/02).
- **Núñez, Anna**, *El Dorado Communications Inc.*, Houston. (3/6/02)
- **Oliva, José**, *Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues*, Chicago. (5/15/02)
- **Oranday, Nora**, Chicago. (5/17/02)
- **Ortiz, Francisco**, *Casa Guanajuato*, Houston. (3/15/02)
- **Ospina, Norman**, *American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)*, Chicago. (5/16/02)
- **Pastrana, Joaquín**, *Mexican Consulate*, Chicago. (4/22/02)
- **Pérez, Idida**, *West Town Leadership United (WTLU)*, Chicago. (4/30/02)
- **Pría, Melba**, *Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior, Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Ciudad de México. (8/7/02)
- **Purcell, Bill**, *Office for Peace and Justice, Archdiocese of Chicago*, Chicago. (5/29/02)
- **Rincón, Alejandra**, *Houston Independent School District, Emergency Immigrant Education Program*, Houston. (2/28/02)
- **Rodríguez, Félix**, *Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME)*, Houston. (3/16/02)
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- **Solórzano, Miguel** (Padre), *St. Philip of Jesus Church*, Houston. (6/21/02)
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