Latino Migration Politics in Chicago from the 1930s to the 1970s

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Abstract

This study examines how Latino migration politics developed in Chicago from the 1930s to the 1970s. Although scholars usually identify the emergence of Latino immigration activism in the 1960s and predominantly in the region of the Southwest with the farm workers movement, this study argues that immigration activism began much earlier in the Midwest from the 1930s onwards in settlement houses and expanded with local and state reformers. I examine Latino migration politics in three stages: settlement activism, local and state activism, and community activism. This framework of activism at the local and state levels is unique since most scholarship associates the contest over immigration reform at the national level, centering on issues of immigration enforcement and nationality requirements.

Activists and social reformers shared an agenda in favor of Latino immigrants’ rights, which consisted of making their contribution visible as Chicago’s workers and as community members. Social reformers and immigrant rights activists formed a civic front that incorporated different reform agendas at local and state levels, focusing on urban, social, and community reforms. Consequently, the city’s Latino social reformers created a diverse agenda that aimed to improve the social conditions of immigrants, an intricate part of the story of immigrant rights in Chicago.

I used archival material to document Latino migration politics with the work of social organization and Illinois state reformers, such as the Immigration Protective League, Northwestern University Settlement, Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission, the Illinois...
Migrant Council, Latino Institute, and *Mujeres Latinas en Acción*. Altogether, these reformers crafted immigration right activism in Illinois. They expanded an advocacy model that goes beyond the more traditional assimilation framework that centered on naturalization programs, but in a broader model that helped them gain employment and specialized needs like bilingual education and programs for immigrant women.
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Introduction

Latino Migration Politics in Chicago

The shared agendas of Latino immigrant groups and social reformers helped transform the socio-political landscape of immigrants in Chicago. This project concentrates on how Latino immigrant groups contributed to the city not only as workers and clients of settlement houses but as participants of reform movements. By looking at social reformers and Latino organizations, I trace the expansion of immigrant rights activism in Chicago from the 1930s to the late 1970s. Reformers from Chicago’s settlement houses increasingly focused on immigrant Latino/a workers. The collaboration between Latino and social reformers can help contextualize the early history of Latino participation in Chicago’s social movements and document their strategies and efforts to drive immigration reform locally. I do so by analyzing the alliances they formed and the reform goals they shared. Immigrant rights activism changed in the postwar era, especially as Latino groups voiced concerns about immigrant inequality and poverty in Chicago. Case studies of these organizations draw even more parallels between Chicago reformers and other social movements in the United States.¹

Social reformers are the principal actors of this immigrant rights activism story. The reformers I examine include local and state actors, women activists from the settlement houses,

and Latino immigrant groups who were mainly Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Central American immigrant workers and who worked and supported immigrant rights. Social reformers included individuals and community residents of Chicago settlement houses, as well as students and professors of the University of Chicago, many of them immigrants themselves. By the mid-twentieth century, Latino immigration reformers were already developing community civic groups and reform agendas that have had a long-lasting influence on the city.

The collaboration of these individuals and social reformers from organizations and settlement houses—such as the Immigrants’ Protective League (IPL) and Northwestern University Settlement (NUS), Association House and the Chicago Commons—shaped immigration activism. Settlement reformers in the 1920s had previously worked on relief assistance programs for immigrants and engaged in social and welfare reforms; they provided housing, and English and citizenship classes to many Latin American migrants, and turned to advocate for immigration rights. Immigration activism combined the efforts of several state level organizations, such as the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission (SPPC), Illinois Committee for Migrant Children (ICMC), Illinois Migrant Council (IMC), with community level efforts in groups such as the Latino Institute and Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA). Settlement houses collaborated and remained involved with immigration reformers, as was the case for the Chicago Commons Association and the Latino Institute, indicating the influence of the settlement model on Latino immigrant rights activism.

Activists and social reformers shared an agenda in favor of Latino immigrants’ rights, which consisted of making visible their contribution as Chicago’s workers and as community
members. Social reformers and immigrant rights activists formed a civic front that incorporated different reform agendas at local and state levels, focusing on urban, social, and community reforms. Consequently, the city’s Latino social reformers developed a diverse and transformative agenda that aimed to improve the social conditions of immigrants, an intricate part of the story of immigrant rights in Chicago. I examine immigrant rights activism in three stages: settlement activism, local and state activism, and community activism.

I suggest that we can better examine the longer trajectory of immigrants rights associated with social reformers and settlement groups in Chicago from the late 1930s to the 1970s. I will illustrate the development of settlement activism in Chicago neighborhoods from the 1930s to 1940s, and on refugee policy and international migration from 1945 to the 1950s. Immigrant rights activism continued well into the 1960 and 1970s where the local and state activism and community activism predominated. During the 1930s and the 1940s these groups began to contest immigration restrictions within Chicago-area communities. My point is that gradually, over a few decades, these social reformers, which maintained well-established relationships with local communities and settlement associations in Chicago, turned to fight to include Latino immigrant workers in state reform and legislation. I have identified this shift during the late 1940s when reformers began to develop a model of activism that moved beyond the traditional goal of immigrant assimilation. Since the 1940s and 1950s, these organizations incorporated more inclusive goals, such as securing rights for refugees and immigrant workers. By the 1960s and 1970s, settlement houses and social reformers from local and state
organizations moved away from the traditional model of immigrant activism and shifted towards advocating for Latino equality and immigrant rights.

By exploring the larger shifts in immigrant rights activism in the city, I shed light on the history of social and urban reform in Chicago. Settlement houses, also known as tenements, developed as places for the protection of immigrants and safeguards of refugees where reformers could do immigration advocacy by either working as volunteers or as professionals in training. Their work departed from the more established model of assimilation and Americanization programs of settlement houses. They shifted their goals from assimilating immigrants to instead advocating for immigrant inclusion, and they showed support for immigrant workers facing housing evictions, unemployment and abject poverty. This civic front of social reformers worked with Latino immigrants and advocated for immigrant labor rights. Organizations like the IPL and NUS aided in the process of incorporating issues of immigrant equality into Chicago’s social reform narrative.

This story of immigrant reformers in Chicago contributes to literature on Latina and U.S. women’s histories. It shows how a strong civic front of predominantly women reformers


developed strong professional alliances that shaped immigrant rights activism. Women and immigrant activists fought for immigrant rights as reformers from the settlement houses, as members of local organizations, as state reformers, and as community leaders. This is consistent with much literature on U.S. women reformers, such as that of progressive reformers who worked as political and social reformers in the early twentieth century. My story begins in the mid 1930s, evaluating how women activists from the settlement houses in Chicago became immigrant advocates. Similarly, I show how Latina reformers participated in state and local organizations that pushed for legislation favorable to Latinos and immigrant workers in the state of Illinois. Women’s professional alliances contributed to the history of immigrant rights activism.

My project differs from other histories of Latino migration politics in the United States in that it demonstrates the diverse reform objectives of immigration activists in Chicago. Previous studies have stressed how immigrant reformers have fought significant battles by contesting: U.S. immigration restrictions, national origins quotas and naturalization requirements, and anti-immigrant sentiments and polices. In many ways, historians have shown how Latino activists have claimed the legal rights of immigrant workers and advocated for inclusive immigration

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reform. My work examines how that immigration activism spilled over into other areas of social reform; it emphasizes how Chicago social reformers advocated for Latino immigrant rights at the local, state, and community levels. This last point is important for the field of Latino history because it shows that Latino activists were not exclusively fighting for national immigration reform; they also asserted immigrant rights at the local and state levels. Social reformers and Latino activists helped to integrate broad issues of social advocacy for Latinos in American cities.

The Latino activists I investigate worked with social organizations in Chicago advancing broad reform objectives including bilingual education, fair housing and employment conditions for immigrant workers. I show how settlement and immigrant activists changed the political and social conditions of Latino immigrants in Chicago. They aimed to achieve inclusive practices at the state and local level for refugee immigrants in the 1950s, on behalf of bilingual education and agricultural immigrant workers in the 1960s, and supported community development during the 1960s and 1970s. By analyzing these activists and immigrant groups I also draw parallels between the goals of immigrants’ organizations in Illinois, which primarily served immigrant workers in Chicago, and those of organizations fighting for agricultural workers in the


Southwest. Still, I explore the lines of disagreement and sources of conflict within the different sectors of immigrant activism with the purpose of exposing the heterogeneity of Latino immigrant rights groups and social reformers in the state of Illinois.

Immigrant rights activism helped to change the social and political landscape of Latinos in the twentieth century. This model of activism allows scholars to gain insights into how social reformers, traditionally associated with the settlement houses, fought for immigrants by increasingly advocating for their legal and labor rights. This history of immigration activism in Chicago helps to illustrate how migration politics expanded in the United States and to chronicle how voluntary associations and leadership organizations locally challenged immigrant exclusion.

**Settlement Activism in Chicago**

Settlement Activism developed with the early history of immigration reformers within the settlement movement during the 1920s and late 1930s. Activists from Settlement houses, such as the IPL, the Chicago Commons, the Association House, and the NUS, collaborated on advancing broad solutions to immigrant problems. This type of settlement activism helped develop local social services and housing tenements for immigrants in abject poverty. They developed a settlement model that expanded local efforts, which were independent from naturalization and assimilation efforts. As a local voluntary association in Chicago, the IPL served as an intermediary agency among immigrants, public officials, and local settlement houses. Organizations like the IPL and NUS, for example, in the 1930s and mid 1940s mobilized efforts to help immigrant workers and refugees to obtain employment opportunities and promoted fair refugees migration policies. In order to do so, they worked locally with immigrant
support groups near the settlement houses. Settlement activists organized anti-poverty campaigns, social programs, and conferences on international migration, using various social and legal strategies to secure rights for immigrants in Chicago.

Settlement activists created alliances with Illinois state agencies as well as through active collaboration with other settlement houses, which included the Chicago Federation of Settlement houses. While the settlement houses belonged to the federation, they retained their own work structure. The IPL, in fact, shared common goals with other voluntary associations, such as the Northwestern University Settlement, the Chicago Commons and the Association House, in their fight against poverty. Some reformers participated in philanthropic activities, such as distributions of clothing and food-banks as well as providing housing for families in abject poverty. The Chicago Common Association, which had worked with immigrant programs since the 1930s, mainly collaborated with the Latino Institute through the 1960s and 1970s.

The settlement activism of organizations like the IPL and Chicago Commons was not necessarily social welfare. Historians, who have written about the IPL and other settlement associations, agreed that these organizations focused on state and federal poverty policies, distributing relief services. These studies stressed the administrative history of the U.S. welfare state without distinguishing between agencies that provided social services and those that

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8 See Immigrant Protective League Records, Special bills on behalf of immigrants, Protective League 76th congress 1939-1940.
9 Northwestern University archival documents Quarterly Report 1915
fought for immigrant rights. Nonetheless, Chicago settlement houses also incorporated immigration and employment issues into social betterment campaigns. Fighting locally for immigrant rights became a driving force for these organizations that supported relief benefits, such as unemployment and housing opportunities. This model consisted of addressing and contesting city poverty as well as of integrating immigrant labor. This interest on social equality helped the IPL to establish an immigrant-oriented agency, paving the way for future labor and immigrant rights activism.

Latino reformers employed local and state level activism during the 1960 and 1970s. From the postwar period onward, immigration activist groups like the IPL and state reformers from the SSPC shifted from a strictly philanthropic, local model to a more consistent and complex network of social reformers, who aimed to achieve reforms at the state level. State and local activists offered services to newly arrived immigrant workers and families from Latin American countries.

**State and Local Immigration Activism**

During the 1960s, state level activists from the Spanish Speaking People Commission (SSPC) helped to develop an even larger network of immigration activists and state-centered reformers. Members from the SSPC created alliances not only with state and public officials but also with Illinois local reformers. They collaborated by preparing public hearings and study groups, as well as visiting Illinois migrant camps and correctional centers in the 1960s and 1970s to investigate the condition lack of rights and of bilingual services. Consequently, Latino
participation in state level committees grew as SSPC members centered on Latino immigrant issues and on the recognition of their contribution to the state reforms.

Local activism aimed to include the variety of problems affecting immigrant workers in the State of Illinois while settlement activism became professionalized. Reformers expanded professional alliances with other settlement associations like the Chicago Commons and Association House and secured participation in statewide conferences with organizations like the Illinois Migrant Council. Settlement activists began recruiting professional immigrant reformers to work with immigrants and with the families of displaced persons and refugees. The IPL, for example, formed new alliances with social reformers in the city that allowed them to become more vocal and active while fighting for the rights of refugee immigrants.

Immigration activism during the 1960s and 1970s added local and state actors into the story of Latino Illinois state reform. State level organizations —like the SSPC, renamed in the 1970s as the Spanish Speaking People Study Commission, the Illinois Commission for Migrant Children (ICMC), and the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) —set forth a multifaceted approach to solve the most relevant problems of migration workers in the state: housing, education, vocational training, fair employment, and bilingual services for bilingual communities. These organizations collaborated on different levels, state and local, which, despite having different origins, shared common objectives. This multifaceted approach developed from the settlement activism as it stressed fair labor practices and employment for migrant workers.

Local activists from the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) attended to the grievances of agricultural and temporary workers by helping them to secure rights. They exposed the lack of
attention to farm workers in Illinois, like the many agricultural and horticultural immigrant workers who arrived in northeastern Illinois in the 1960s and 1970s. This advocacy for fair migratory employment represented a step forward for immigration activists, as they worked to promote the rights of farm workers and their families. The central reform objective of these immigration activists in Illinois combined several strategies, from legislative effort to local participation, which helped to secure immigrant rights, in particular for Latinos in Illinois.

Similar to the SSPC, the IMC from 1964 to 1979 operated as a multi-service agency that worked to pass important legislation for immigrants in the state of Illinois. Like other state agencies, they helped migrant families and agricultural workers organize and reform laws throughout the Midwest.

During the 1970s, the alliances of state reformers with immigration advocates developed an intricate interplay between state level and local actions. The Spanish Speaking People Committee launched a new working group to permanently study the general problems faced by Illinois’ Latino population. The Study Commission combined several members, such as elected officials, private organizations and state level agencies. By 1972, its members advanced the “Return to Action” agenda, which advocated for immigrant rights throughout the state. As immigration advocates, they helped Latino immigrants and residents to improve working and living conditions. To that end, they planned and organized numerous work subcommittees and state hearings. The Study Commission reported on the myriad of services available for immigrants and subcommittees, which involved helping migrant workers on issues, such as:
housing, bilingual education, justice and police fairness, consumer protection, and political participation.

State reformers from the Illinois Committee for Migrant Children (ICMC) also created their own independent committees to work specifically on assisting migrant families during the 1970s. These reformers provided state level protection for those in abject poverty. The ICMC also collaborated with other immigration activists in securing legislation that would extend individualized help and other services for Latino immigrant families, as well as providing bilingual services for bilingual and bicultural families in areas of childcare and daycare centers. The ICMC joined other organizations, such as the SSPC and IMC, in advocating for bilingual legislation in the state of Illinois. The collaboration of the IMC and the SSPC in fighting for Latino immigrant rights in Chicago continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s, while members of the migrant council opened headquarters near agricultural areas and farms in Illinois.

Community and Local Immigration Activism

I also evaluate the community activism of the Latino Institute during the late 1960s and 1970s. The Latino Institute operated a variety of community leadership programs and provided services that directly addressed the development of the Latino immigrants’ communities and institutions. Their programs provided training, built alliances among Latino organizations and community groups, served as a research and a documentation center, and assisted Latino community organizations in raising funds and planning programs that meet specific community needs.¹¹

¹¹ Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
The Latino Institute developed Latino community leadership for the immigrant communities in Chicago. They aspired to solve the social inequities of their communities by developing broad local strategies. The members from the Latino Institute intertwined immigrant rights activism with community advocacy, which aimed to create change in Latino neighborhoods and to empower local leaders. The activism of the Latino Institute in the 1970s resembled the agenda of settlement reformers of the Immigrant Protective League (IPL) during the 1940s and 1950s. The Latino Institute and other settlements expanded immigrant rights on the state legislation and social services. Community immigration activism during the 1960s and 1970s combined the social programs previously used by settlement house activists in Chicago.

The Chicago Commons Settlement integrated the Latino Community activism of the Latino Institute.

During the 1970s, the relationship between the Latino Institute and Chicago Commons was so well built that through their collaboration they expanded immigrant rights in Chicago. The Chicago Commons’ settlement involvement with social reformers from the Latino Institute helped to fight for immigration and social equality, a connection that actually dated back to the late 1960s. Likewise, throughout the 1970s, they also shared common reform objectives with immigrant women activists from community organizations like Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA) and with others such as the Spanish Speaking People Commission and Illinois Migration Council. For instance, MLEA organized Latina immigrant women, contributing to the development of community and local activism in Chicago. They embraced the settlement model and developed a type of Latino settlement service center for immigrant women.
These relationships and alliances, between the Latino Institute, MLEA and the Chicago Commons, were significant because they paralleled the collaboration of the Immigration Protective League, the Association House and Northwestern Settlement during the 1940 and 1950s. I contend that the Chicago Commons’ outlook departed from the traditional settlement house program. According to the Chicago Common members, their activism reached “far beyond charity and ‘doing things’ for people.” Their goals were to eliminate social inequalities and injustice, and that although other groups like the Spanish Speaking People Commission had achieved passing legislation in favor of all Latinos in the state, it was not until the late 1960s and 1970s that Latino community activism began to be acknowledged, solving problems and claiming local changes.

The Latino Institute, the Chicago Commons Settlement and Mujeres Latinas en Acción created alliances and collaborated during the late 1960s and 1970s. They participated in conferences and initiatives like Strategies for Jobs in the 1970s. The Latino Institute worked in partnership with Chicago Commons and expanded their relationship with Mujeres Latinas. The Chicago Commons’ affiliation with these groups is a testament of the type of settlement the Chicago Commons was in 1974 when they decided to lock a partnership with Latino organizations. The work of these organizations overlapped slightly in time. Ever since the 1960s Aqui Estamos (We are Here) campaigns and after the 1971 conference, the Spanish Coalitions for Jobs and the 1973 Latin Strategies for the 70s, the MLEA, Latino Institute and the Chicago Commons worked together to recognize Latino immigrant rights and fighting for Latino social

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12 Latino Institute, New Directions 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago, Illinois.
equality. The Latino Institute and MLEA represented the early stages of Latino local and immigration activism in Chicago, which is consistent with Latino migration politics and Chicano activism in the United States.\textsuperscript{13}

In conclusion, Chicago is often viewed as a “sanctuary city” for the protection and betterment of immigrants. This notion of the protection of immigrants can be further examined in relationship to the history of the Settlement houses. Reformers associated with Chicago’s early history include important settlements houses and personalities of the women’s progressive movement, such as Grace and Edith Abbott of the Immigrant Protective League, and Jane Addams of the Hull House and Francis Willard House. However, we must not overlook that these institutions continued working on immigrant issues throughout the twentieth century, serving as a useful model for immigrant rights. The activism of settlement reformers during mid-twentieth century influenced Latino reformers who transformed migration politics in the city. Perhaps that idea of Chicago as a sanctuary city, or as a place for refugee centers, is a testament of the continuity of settlement work.

Existing literature in Migration Activism

My approach is new and different compared with scholarship on Latino political activism and immigrant unionization.\textsuperscript{14} While many studies emphasized Latino activism as political

\textsuperscript{13} For literature on Mujeres Latinas En Acción (MLEA) see Leonard Ramirez, Chicanas of 18th Street: Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago University of Illinois Press, 2011; On Chicago’s Latino early civic organizations, see: Lilia Fernandez, “From the Near West Side to 18th Street: Mexican Community Formation and Activism in Mid-Twentieth Century Chicago.” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society Vol. 98, No.3 (Autumn 2005), 162-183; Brown in the Windy City Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago. (University of Chicago Press), 2012.

action that successfully unified into a national movement to fight for equality and against many discriminatory practices and institutions, my study looks at Latino compartmentalized and fragmented alliances spreading out of local, state, and communitarian efforts. The immigration activists I evaluated did not form a unified bloc or a strictly political national organization but they pushed for social reforms across time in Chicago. They evolved out of non-traditional sectors, such as settlement houses, reform groups, and civic associations, as well as state workers that spend time working on issues of Latino immigrant inequality. The common link between these groups is the insistence of advancing social reforms and immigration inclusion with different institutional approaches.

I situate my work outside the framework of Latino mass movement and politics. Traditional scholarships have explored the development of concerted actions to end legal exclusion like segregation in schools, housing, and in employment, or helped Latinos to secure a place in electoral politics during the twentieth century. My story looks at the alliances of reformers before such a movement is formed and organized. That is, the process by which individuals spoke about abject immigrant poverty inside of tenement houses and communities, complained about work practices in Chicago’s defense industries, or claimed for bilingual

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services inside Illinois state institutions. Above all, I look at the different strands of immigration reform shaping a civic movement or social movement for immigrants, which is what we now label immigrant rights activism. I write of multiple actors and levels, and not of unified leadership such as was the case in the most successful mass protest movements in Latino History like the Chicano movement or agricultural workers unions. However, I do believe my work tells the history of how different reform groups created immigration alliances in Chicago, and from that standpoint they could push for larger reforms. So, although they did not form a national movement, they crafted the platform for other Latino movements to spread out and gained visibility. The best examples of this possible shift from local and state migration politics into something larger are the Immigration rallies and marches in cities like Los Angeles and Chicago from the 1990s to 2006s, where different sectors with apparent diverse backgrounds, such as undocumented workers or children and young adults, called “the dreamers” achieved visibility at national level organizing into a unified battle that for national legislation.

I also view my work departing from the scholarship on Latino migrations in Chicago, because it does not aim to emphasize the development or emergence of a particular Latino community or neighborhood. I do explore the social problems that migrants experienced and fought against, as well as the organizations they formed to solve them in different Latino communities. Scholars like Lilia Fernandez and Gabriela Arredondo among others have explored that internal migration patterns in Chicago allowed Latinos to develop community centers and neighborhood groups to solve discriminatory practices and exclusions in the city, sometimes as a
result or urban renewal programs and immigration enforcement.\textsuperscript{16} My work looks at how immigration reformers established networks with city and state agencies to work on Latino immigrant issues. They expanded an advocacy model that goes beyond the more traditional assimilation framework that centered on naturalization programs, but in a broader model that helped them gain employment and specialized needs like bilingual education and programs for immigrant women.

**On Terminology**

Lastly, in my work I use the terminology such as civic and reform groups to highlight the different ways of engaging in immigrant right activism. For settlement groups and associations like the Northwestern and Immigrant Protective League, I refer them as civic reformers or civic organizations, as their participation was voluntary and at times paying membership fees. When describing a shift in the work from voluntary association to employed actors within the settlement model, I refer to them as local reformer or social reformer. A theme that is fascinating within the settlement world is that most settlement houses between the Great Depression and the New Deal eras turned into state social agencies, or in some cases, their civic reformers obtained employment in those agencies. Having being employed in settlement houses prepared them well to work in state agencies. The stories of social reformers fighting for immigrant rights in the 1950s and 1960s show us also the transformation in employment patterns of local and state

\textsuperscript{16} Lilia Fernandez, “From the Near West Side to 18\textsuperscript{th} Street: Mexican Community Formation and Activism in Mid-Twentieth Century Chicago.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* Vol. 98, No.3 (Autumn 2005), 162-183; *Brown in the Windy City Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*. (University of Chicago Press), 2012; Ramirez, Leonard G. *Chicanas of 18\textsuperscript{th} Street: Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.
agencies. In my work, the main difference between a state worker and state social reformer in the 1970s is that, the former is employed by a member of Illinois State Assembly, for example as a committee member in charge of an immigration taskforce, while the latter is an individual group or association fighting for immigrant rights at state level. Altogether, local, civic, social, state, community level actors created migration politics in Chicago.
Chapter 1

The Immigrant Protective League and Settlement Houses in Chicago from the 1930s to the 1940s

The concerns of settlement groups over immigrants’ communities expanded locally and independently from naturalization efforts. This first chapter explores early immigration reformers within the settlement movement during the 1930s and late 1940s by considering case studies of the following settlement houses: The Immigrant Protective League (IPL) and Northwestern Settlement House (NUS). I analyze the IPL as a local voluntary association in Chicago that served as an intermediary agency among immigrants, public officials, local settlement houses, and consuls. Social reformers from organizations like the IPL helped develop local social services and housing tenements for immigrants in abject poverty in Chicago. These social reformers from the settlement houses also advanced broad solutions to immigrant employment problems and transitioned into more complex community networks.

Both organizations, IPL and NUS, in the 1930s and mid 1940s had two main goals. The first goal was mobilizing efforts to aid immigrant workers and families in abject poverty and helping them to obtain employment opportunities. The second goal was promoting fair migration policies and working locally with consuls and immigrant support groups near the settlement houses.17 They worked by reaching out to immigrant workers and helping them fill out immigration documentation, like residency forms. These organizations publicized the ample services they offered immigrants, which is why the history of settlement reformers paved the way for

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17 See Immigrant Protective League Records, Special bills on behalf of cases in which the immigrants Protective League 76th congress 1939-1940.
emerging immigrant groups in the city. Future reforms groups in the 1970s incorporated the platform of groups like the IPL and NUS.

The members of the IPL gained recognition as reformers of Chicago’s immigrant communities during the Great Depression, engaging primarily in relief assistance. Social reformers included individuals and community residents of Chicago settlement houses, as well as students and professors at the University of Chicago, many of them immigrants themselves. The IPL, located on Dearborn Street, had a small staff of less than fifty members, including a small cohort of social reformers, trained social workers, and women activists. Grace Abbott was the executive director, and Adena Miller Rich was the head resident director of the IPL. They organized anti-poverty campaigns, social programs, and conferences on international migration, using various social and legal strategies to secure rights for immigrants in Chicago.

The IPL not only created alliances with Illinois state agencies but also collaborated with other settlement houses, including the Chicago Federation of Settlement Houses, which was the central institution for social reformers from the settlement houses. This organization shared common goals with other voluntary associations like Northwestern University Settlement and Chicago Commons in their fight against poverty. Grace Abbot and Adena Rich participated in philanthropic activities, such as distributions of clothing and food from food banks, as well as housing for families in abject poverty. Historians who have written about the IPL agreed that these organizations, among other settlement associations, focused on state and federal poverty

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18 The Board of Directors included other Chicago’s personalities, such as Abel Davis, S.P. Breckinridge, Marian Schsibsby, Jane Addams, Esther L. Khon, Julia C. Lanthrop, Earnest Freund, and Edith Abbott.
19 Northwestern University Archives (NUS) *Quarterly Report*, 1915
policies, distributing relief services. These studies stressed the administrative history of the U.S. welfare state without distinguishing between agencies that provided social services and those that fought for immigrant rights. Here, I contend that these Chicago settlement houses also incorporated immigration and labor issues into social betterment campaigns. Fighting for immigrant rights became a driving force of these organizations that supported measures to combat unemployment and provide housing opportunities and also achieve state-level social reform. The IPL model consisted of addressing and contesting city poverty, as well as integrating immigrant labor. This interest in social equality helped the IPL to establish an immigrant-oriented agency, paving the way for future labor and immigrant rights activism.

The IPL activism was directed at the state and to the communities they served. At the local level, the IPL contested anti-immigrant legislation in Chicago and aimed to achieve long-term reform, targeting social inequality and legal exclusion of the city’s immigrant communities. I present a more complete picture of how the IPL developed a model that was useful in fighting for immigrant rights, rather than just giving assistance to immigrants wronged by intense anti-immigrant legislation. In actuality, the IPL became legal and social advocates for immigrant workers in Chicago industries.


21 Manuscripts Collections from the Chicago; History Archives, Chicago Public Library Archives; Special Collections Library at the University of Illinois Chicago/Springfield, Illinois.

22 Immigrant Protective League, *Annual Reports* at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
During the Progressive Era, members of the IPL argued against the Alien Registration Act and the National Origins Quota Act of 1924. They understood that these laws extended immigrant exclusions, hindering the mobility of immigrant families and communities. The IPL’s concerns about anti-immigrant policies were realistic since legal hurdles to immigration continued in the 1940s wartime period. Thus, reformers from the IPL aimed to challenge some of these restrictions within Chicago-area communities and joined many organizations from the settlement movement to spark their long-term immigrant rights activism. The IPL centered on the betterment of labor conditions in defense and railroad industries, specifically for Mexican immigrants workers. The stories of Mexican immigrant workers during the 1940s showed the level of engagement of settlement groups like the IPL with immigrants employed in defense and railroad industries.

As I will demonstrate next, the IPL also created lasting working alliances with other settlement houses and with local reformers in Chicago. These local stories from archival collections of the IPL and NUS reveal how early immigration activists collaborated with social reformers of the settlement houses. This chapter starts in the 1930s when the New Deal programs and policies challenged the relevance and independence of small local organizations from federal social programs. The settlement model allowed groups like the IPL and NUS to mainly focus on local community efforts that included immigrant reforms until the late 1940s.

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Settlement workers: The IPL and other settlements houses in the 1930s

The members of the IPL and other settlements provided individual services to immigrants who visited the offices and also prepared local immigration studies. An interest in studying immigrant comminutes and Chicago-area neighborhoods dominated the early work of the IPL during the 1920s. Periodic surveys made by social reformers such as Grace Abbott, Anita Jones, Lea D. Taylor, Harriet Vittum, and Adena Rich showed that the IPL belonged to a social movement that oversaw anti-poverty reforms. They investigated immigrant neighborhoods and gathered data on the changing labor practices towards immigrants. Abbott’s studies, such as “The Bulgarian: A New Element in Chicago’s Immigration Problem,” showed that social reformers held the view that citizenship and education helped immigrants increase their economic and social prospects.\(^\text{24}\) In her report, Abbott highlighted the stories of 600 “unemployed and starving” Bulgarian immigrants who on April 8, 1908, marched on Chicago City Hall demanding work.\(^\text{25}\) According to Abbott, this demonstration was harmless and ineffective, in the sense that it did not further aggravate the city’s industrial crisis. Yet she argued that, if viewed in terms of its larger social significance, this demonstration showed that private organizations had to develop a sense of urgency to tackle immigrant problems. This organization first worked with European immigrant groups, which developed methods and programs they later used in helping Latino American immigrants.


\(^{25}\) Ibid, ‘The Bulgarian: A New Element in Chicago’s Immigration Problem.”
The IPL in the early settlement days was committed to immigrants’ advancement and rights. They had to learn about immigrants’ particular circumstances, “their economic and political conditions” at home, their reasons for coming to Chicago, and their experiences since arrival. Most of her study outlined immigrants’ socio-economic condition, such as their income and work experience. She stressed that, “unable to secure work from the free employment offices of the state of Illinois, the foreigner [was] compelled to rely on private employment agencies,” curtailing the state’s responsibility.26 Illinois reformers like Abbott argued that the state’s legislative reforms had failed to incorporate immigrants. She recognized that they usually had to look for employment in railroad construction across the country, but that each job was temporary.

Other social reformers who were part of Chicago’s social settlement house movement, such as Anita Jones, similarly helped the IPL to develop survey studies that could explain Chicago’s demographic changes caused by immigration. As a result of the IPL’s work in Chicago in the early 1920s, reformers aimed to determine the kind of services they could provide to newly arrived immigrant workers.27 To this end, the IPL hired Anita Jones to conduct surveys for them. Jones was from Texas and had researched the migration patterns of Mexicans living in Chicago for her doctoral dissertation in social work at the University of Chicago.28 With the help of researchers like Jones, the IPL documented new ethnic communities, including Mexican

26 Ibid, ‘The Bulgarian: A New Element in Chicago’s Immigration Problem.’
27 IPL, “Condition of Arrival of Immigrants.” Immigrant Protective League Records academic work and immigration lectures 1940, at the University of Chicago, Deportation, May 16, 1940, and Repatriation. May 17, 1940.
28 Ibid, Arredondo, Mexican Chicago, 41; “Conditions of Arrival of Immigrants.” Although Anita was born in Texas, and her father was originally from Missouri. She moved from Texas to Chicago to study social work at the University of Chicago, and she later worked at the IPL.
immigrants and other European immigrants like and German immigrants. As many other social settlements, this organization reported that immigration to Chicago expanded greatly from the 1890s to the 1920s and arrived predominantly from Europe.

Settlement reformers were quite ambitious, believing that their work would be transformative. Lea D. Taylor, head resident of the Chicago Common Settlement, noted that even though the people were out of work, “industries were running full tilt, and profits were rolling in.” Taylor stressed that settlement houses were vital in the neglected areas of the city. Although Chicago had much to learn, she held the view that “it was a city in the making,” and the settlements had grown along with it. According to Taylor, settlement work “was part of Chicago’s civic front.” She stated that, “if one reads the history of the development of many of the civic agencies which are today taken for granted in Chicago, one will see on the early committees and boards, the names of the many [pioneers of the settlement movement] who had developed efforts tackling one or another city problem.” In her list of organizations, she included the IPL, alongside other Chicago-area organizations—the United Charities, the Juvenile Court Committee, the Juvenile Protective League, and the Municipal Voters League. Her remarks were part of a lecture, “The Settlement Community and Settlement Leadership in Chicago,” that she delivered to the Chicago Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers’ orientation series for the settlement staff in the fall of 1946.

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29 Lea D. Taylor’s papers from the Chicago Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers, 1-8.  
During the 1930s and 1940s, the IPL agenda, or “civic front” as Taylor called it, gained the support of educated social workers and professionals from middle class backgrounds, and many of them later became members of the IPL’s Board of Directors. Although some of these organizations were “living settlements” that housed immigrant families, students, and early reformers from other cities, they also focused on immigration legislation, in particular immigrant restrictions. Taylor acknowledged that immigrant restrictions represented one of the challenges the settlements faced since the U.S. government had implemented literacy tests, a key requirement in the immigration laws since 1913. She argued as well that other pressing issues had surfaced in Chicago, such as issues of “labor struggles, of child labor, and of the sweat shop, the vice districts, municipal corruption, city sanitation, and garbage collection, housing health.”

For these reformers, during the New Deal era, achieving social reform in the city was at the center of the story of immigrant reformers and other settlement groups. The IPL became an intermediary agency that by the 1930s integrated reformers groups from the settlement houses and considered the claims and grievances of local immigrants working and living in the city.

As they viewed it, fighting for immigrant rights meant to contest immigrants’ economic and social inequality. For instance, Harriet Vittum, head resident director of the NUS, linked poverty relief efforts with political change. In that regard, organizations like the NUS developed anti-poverty campaigns because they were concerned with unemployment rates in the Depression era. Vittum expressed gratitude to the IPL for their joint efforts on these campaigns and became increasingly concerned with Latin American migrants, advocating fair employment

for immigrants in the city.\textsuperscript{33} She was involved in many campaigns “beyond the settlement” movement, delivering numerous speeches encouraging social service and political involvement, which in this context meant allying with other organizations to contest issues like the immigration restrictions.\textsuperscript{34} National immigration legislation, such as the Immigration Act or Literacy Act of 1917 and the Immigration Act or Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, had an impact the local level. Even when legislation implemented restrictions upon immigrants, it gave social reformers and organizations like the IPL and the NUS the platform to help immigrant workers.

Therefore, ever since the early settlement days, advocates from the IPL gained importance within Chicago area settlement houses. Reformers like Adena Rich used these relationships to advance social justice objectives. As a trained teacher and a legal scholar, Rich lectured about immigration as the director of the IPL from 1926 to 1935.\textsuperscript{35} In 1935 she was chosen as director of Hull House, yet she remained on the Board of Directors and as a member of the IPL.\textsuperscript{36} Chicago progressive reformers like Rich focused on various areas, such as demands for a better juvenile court system and for improvements to urban housing and sanitation, crusades for safe food, efforts to ban alcohol, and efforts to regulate corporations.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{itemize}
\item Some of her most important roles included an “unsuccessful bid” for alderman in 1914, and she became the chair of the Women’s Campaign for Charles Evans Hughes in his 1916 Presidential run.
\item Northwestern University Settlement, General Administrative Records 1892-1995, Series 41/1, Boxes 1-76.
\item She was born in Pennsylvania, graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio, and then became a graduate fellow from the School of social service at the University of Chicago. “Mrs. K.F. Rich Chosen Chief of Hull House; Veteran of Social Work for Immigrants” in Chicago Tribune August 14, 1935; “Clubs to Have a Conference on Citizenship” in Chicago Tribune November 28, 1937. See also IPL collection B.8-F.87; Adena Miller Rich Papers at The University of Illinois at Chicago; U.S. Census of 1930.
\item Fletcher Kenneth Rich, her husband, came to Chicago from Georgia, and worked as a partner in the stock brokerage firm Morrill, Rich, and Wilson.
\item Ibid, Abbott Reader, Page xiii.
\end{itemize}
For their part, the members of the IPL kept advocating for inclusive immigration legislation. This was the case during the 1920s and the 1930s, when the Immigration Acts and New Deal programs, respectively, took effect. During this period, the members of the IPL contested the enactment of new restrictions against immigrants, including new entry requirements for immigrant registration and residency. The IPL advanced its immigrant rights activism by advocating for the inclusion of immigrants on social and legal ground. This was one of the several ways the IPL created a model that paved the way for future immigrant rights activism, which developed afterward in the twentieth century.

In sum, unlike other progressive era reformers, IPL’s reformers did not exclusively focus on distributing relief, but instead fought for reform by contesting unfair labor conditions and immigrant labor rights. From the 1920s onward, members of the IPL, like Abbott, Taylor, Jones, Rich, and from the NUS, especially through Harriet Vittum, gained new roles as immigrant rights activists in Chicago. Above all, they worked to bring visibility to issues of immigrant rights. The IPL, which had begun working as part of the settlement movement in the Chicago area, increasingly assumed a role as advocates of antipoverty campaigns. The IPL was not an organization that worked solely with state-sponsored welfare agencies; it worked beyond that point. This distinction is important because for the IPL, these issues of economic and social justice were tied with national immigrant workers’ labor grievances.

**Local Social reforms for immigrant workers in Chicago during the 1940s**

The IPL and other settlement houses were concerned with Chicago labor practices and with the social conditions of immigrant workers in the 1940s. Here I now explore how Chicago’s
settlement groups promoted the hiring of immigrants in the defense and domestic industry. The IPL social reformers emphasized that labor participation and social involvement was necessary to end unfair labor practices and discrimination. They developed the first programs that addressed the urgency of increasing employment and training programs with local communities. Altogether, these efforts helped to shape immigrant rights activism in the city.

The mid 1940s represented a turning point for local reformers in Chicago. For the IPL, collaboration with community and immigrants groups was essential. On September 27, 1945, the IPL met with Mexican social organizations at the Mexican Consulate. The director of the IPL, Adena Rich, called a meeting at the Mexican Consulate at 201 North Wells Street, because the IPL was interested in the activities of the Mexican leaders. Mainly, she aimed to determine the specific needs of Mexican immigrant workers in Chicago and to locate relief aid with agencies and meet immigrant needs. According to IPL records, those invited included: Mr. Almonte, Mexican Consul, Mr. Avina from the Comite Patriotico (patriotic committee), Mrs. Saravia from the Mexican Social Center, Mr. Lopez and Mr. Sarantino from the Area Project, Lucy Carner from Council Social Agencies, and lastly Charles Alaine and Adena Rich from the IPL. This was an important stage in the collaboration between the IPL and local Latino groups. Throughout the 1940s, reformers transitioned to challenge unfair labor practices of railroad industries and to investigate the circumstances of employment.

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38 Immigrant Protective League Records IPL, By-laws Comite Patriotico (patriotic committee), 1945.
39 Immigrant Protective League Records IPL, Mexican cases—illustrative vignettes: 9-25-1947
As this section will show, local immigrant reformers were organizing along with other settlement houses in the city by 1940. The stories of the Olivares’ family in Chicago and a Mexican immigrant family from Kane County, Illinois confirmed the challenges immigrants faced working in Chicago’s defense and railroad industries, and demonstrated that for the IPL topics of labor and migration were interrelated. The IPL transformed into an organization that addressed social mobility and economic opportunities for immigrant workers in the defense and railroad industries. Historian Zaragosa Vargas has documented the labor activism in other cities of the Midwest like Detroit Michigan. In this sense, the story of unemployment and abject poverty of Olivares represented the other end of the spectrum of organized industrial workers, who had better working conditions and union contracts, than unskilled workers like him. Not unionized and unemployed, Olivares could only hope for a stable job in the defense industries, which is why the IPL got involved.

**The Immigrant Protective League: Chicago’s Defense and Railroad Industries**

During the 1940s, the IPL investigated laborers’ grievances, an important point of departure from the objectives of previous settlement movement work. Although the organization continued to contest immigrants’ poverty and exclusion in the city, it turned to investigate immigrant labor issues in the defense industry. Chicago’s industrial plants attracted many immigrant workers who needed employment. As a result of the Good Neighbor Policy, a program that benefited labor recruiters as well as industrial capital, there was a high demand for

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40 By 1948 reformers of the IPL had created a working list of all social agencies in the Chicago area that included the Association House, Chicago Commons, and Northwestern University Settlement.

labor; agreeing to collaborate on workers contracts and other diplomatic channels that allowed for a more active collaboration. Nonetheless, for immigrant workers, employment in the defense industry was not guaranteed, and that was certainly the case for Mexican immigrants and Bracero workers, who were Mexican workers who were recruited under the Good Neighbor Policy. Braceros’ labor contracts allowed Mexicans immigrant groups to work legally in the United States.

In order to help them, the IPL sorted and evaluated the length of immigrant labor contract and other requirements. In the case of Bracero workers facing difficulties the IPL reported: “The league now had a small flock of Mexican deportation cases arising out of the wartime contract labor agreements between the United States and Mexico for man power on the railroads.” They were the Mexican Braceros who arrived in the Chicago area “filling the labor gap by workers away in the armed forces.” In a statement, the IPL reported, “some of the workers had overstayed their permits and were given voluntary departure by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service- with the suggestion that they return back to their families …” This policy created challenges for the IPL and transformed it into a bridge organization between the individual immigrants and the defense industry. In turn, the IPL verified immigrant workers’ work history, helping them find records that could document their legal status without pressuring them into naturalization. Although the IPL had concerns about the impact of the restriction policies upon immigrant workers, it had to intercede for workers who, according to employers,

43 Immigrant Protective League Records, Mexican cases—illustrative vignettes: 9-25-1947
were unemployable as they lacked documentation that would allow them to work legally in the United States.

One local example comes to illustrate this point about hiring practices in defense industries. Jesus Olivares, a Mexican immigrant who was given an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army after three months of service, had used the IPL to find work in the war industry. When he “tried to be naturalized while in the army,” his arrival could not be verified as he entered in 1916, and the authorities kept no records about his entry. As many immigrants who used the IPL services, he was unemployed after serving in the army, and could not obtain employment. According to his records, Olivares had immigrated before the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) started requiring Mexican immigrants to pay “head taxes” upon arrival. But when he reapplied, a judge in Cook County told him, “There was nothing he could do for him.”

The fact that he was not allowed to naturalize, hindering his chances of gaining employment, exemplifies the problems arising in Chicago’s defense industry. These were the problems the IPL aimed to address.

The IPL investigated employers who denied immigrant workers employment in defense industries. When Olivares was first denied a job at the McCormick plant of the International Harvester Company, he explained to the IPL that he had a friend there who told him that he could not be employed because “he [was] an alien immigrant.” The IPL helped him to

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44 IPL’s Mexican workers, Immigrants’ files, Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.8-F.85; B.8-F.86; B.6-F.75; B.5-F.57.
45 IPL’s Mexican workers, Immigrants files, Protective League Records IPL B.8-F.85; B.8-F.86; B.6-F.75; B.5-F.57.
46 IPL’s Mexican workers, Immigrants files, Protective League Records: B.8-F.85; B.8-F.86; B.6-F.75; B.5-F.57.
complete his immigration records for residency application, noting how, since 1924, immigration legislation had a five-years work requirement in order to obtain residency. The IPL committed to intervene on Olivares’ behalf with the International Harvester Company, the company that first denied him work. The IPL argued to the U.S. War Manpower Commission, “there seems to be a feeling that he had not been fairly treated, [and that his mistreatment did not bode] well for Latin-American relations.”47 Using the language of the Good Neighbor Policy, the IPL affirmed the U.S commitment to defense industry work and that the IPL “hope[d] through its friendly service to heal” the “breach” between Mexico and the United States.48 Olivares’ case is significant for the history of immigrant activists because it demonstrated how the IPL shaped immigrant work experiences, a focus that went beyond naturalizing them. Furthermore, it explains that the IPL’s focus changed during the war: first because labor demand heightened competition, and second, because application requirements for all immigrants had made some immigrant workers unemployable.

In order to appreciate the context of Olivares’ employment in defense industries it is necessary to understand how IPL activists dealt closely with immigrant workers.49 IPL’s campaigns to intervene on behalf of immigrant workers allow us to examine how the Good Neighbor Policy was implemented in Chicago and to understand how at times it interfered with the work of the IPL. For example, on March 19, 1943, an editorial in the Chicago Journal of Commerce published the remarks by Herbert H. Kennedy, the president of the board of directors

47 Ibid, IPL, Mexican workers Records
48 Ibid, IPL, Mexican workers Records
of the IPL. He indicated that the agency had worked for many years prior dealing with issues of immigrant poverty and emphasized that the organization had shifted its focus to inclusive views on immigration labor.

As the president of the board of directors of Mr. Kennedy assured the work his organization was doing in collaboration with government representatives. For instance, Kennedy argued that, in cooperation with Nelson Rockefeller’s Office of Inter-American Affairs, it could branch out in welcoming Latin Americans and Mexican immigrants into the city. And in fact, throughout the war, the War Department authorized the IPL to receive financial support. A press release reported on January 22, 1944 that since the IPL had received a grant from the Office of Inter-American Affairs, it had stimulated Mexican and American cultural exchanges in the city. According to the IPL director, the main reason why the IPL was selected to carry out the Good Neighbor Policy in Chicago was because it had the organizational structure to provide social services and carry out legal advocacy work with immigrant workers. The members of the IPL were well equipped for this task because they were professional reformers, and because they had previously investigated the Immigration and Naturalization Services’ procedures when inspecting immigrant entries.


Herbert H. Kennedy was born in 1897 in Australia…. Article 43[“Most of us tend to think that the Good Neighbor policy is something practiced only in Washington and directed toward Latin Americans in their native lands…”We have a Good Neighbor policy in Chicago too. It is directed towards the thousands of people who have migrated from Central and South America, and especially from Mexico…”Many…employed in the skilled industries of the community, but numbers of them are aliens…[who] do not know how to go about becoming citizens; they have school problems with their children, and they themselves good Spanish-speakers, run into difficulties of sorts which might be obviated by a bit of judicious aid and advice.”]

51 Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.6-F.75.
Reformers of the IPL began to evaluate the inclusion of Mexican immigrant workers in Chicago’s defense industry, in part due to the Good Neighbor Policy. For Kennedy “Mexican immigrants [were] making a fine contribution to this country.” He analyzed that their help was needed when European immigration was cut off under Quota Act of 1924. In 1943, Mexican immigrants represented an important group in the community, and the Quota Act did not restrict their entry. In fact, also many Mexican Americans and residents were already citizens. “Even those who are still aliens are sharing their obligations, not only through taxation but as [workers] in defense industries and soldiers in the armed forces.” Kennedy’s statement further demonstrated that the IPL advocates intertwined wartime legislation with an inclusive approach toward the immigrant workers in the defense industry.

Even in Chicago, where there was labor demand for Mexican immigrants workers, they struggled to get full time employment, housing, and workers benefits. Mexican immigrants, like Olivares, were unemployable not only because they failed to meet immigration requirements for legal residency, but also because the distribution of resources was limited as a result of the war. The IPL board of directors noted, as the Illinois state officials had been notified of this lack of funds but that “…services for immigrant workers seem destined to become vitally important in the months ahead,” mainly because the war had increased the number of Latin Americans whose help was appreciated in industrial establishments and agricultural programs in the United States. As a member of the board of directors of the IPL, Rich welcomed government officials into the organization, such as Mrs. Quincy Wright of Chicago, the IPL advisor to the Coordinator

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52 Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.6- F-7
53 Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.6-F.75.
54 “The Good Neighbor Policy takes tangible form in Chicago” University of Illinois, Chicago IPL, B.5-F.57.
of Inter-American Affairs, to meet with Joseph E. Wackler, who was a government representative, to talk about the Inter-American activities. As another Illinois state coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, he reported on March 23, 1943 the striking participation of “Spanish people” in the U.S. war effort.\textsuperscript{55}

With the U.S. involvement in the war, the members of the IPL shifted to challenge unfair employment patterns in the defense industry and their impact upon immigrant workers. On February 8, 1943, members of the IPL, who evaluated employment for immigrants, stated that their contribution to national defense was significant. The members of the IPL were concerned with the dislocation of immigrants returning to the community after the war. They helped families and soldiers find employment in the defense industry. But when the members of the IPL began to focus on Mexican immigrants, they noticed that some of these workers had also reported troubles finding employment; many of them like Olivares could not obtain citizenship, even after working in the war effort.

The IPL, meanwhile, recognized the contribution of Mexican immigrants to the war effort, arguing they had labored “side by side” with other national origin groups.\textsuperscript{56} For the IPL, Mexican immigrants provided the labor necessary helping members of the armed forces to travel and transport war supplies. Furthermore, Mexican immigrants operated the hot furnaces of the steel mills. According to Mrs. Wilson, a worker of the IPL, “without their help, the flow of steel production could not be maintained.”\textsuperscript{57} She pointed out that Mexican immigrants who worked in

\textsuperscript{55} Joseph E. Wackler in 1940 U.S Census: Clifton, New Jersey, and Mrs. Quincy Wright of Chicago in Newspaper Berkshire Evening Eagle (Pittsfield, Berkshire, Massachusetts), April 3, 1947.
\textsuperscript{56} “Wackler,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago.
\textsuperscript{57} “Wackler,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago.
the meatpacking district often joined the armed forces. Wilson also noted that Mexicans working in hotels served both civilians and members of the Armed Forces. [ADD Innis Jimenez-Steel Barrios’ relationship]

Reformers used newspapers as advertising and marketing instruments to promote their inclusive approach regarding Mexican immigrant workers. For instance, the IPL used the newsletter *Mexi-gram* to communicate with the members of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce about the changes in Chicago neighborhoods and communities. One report explained that the IPL recognized the profound contributions of Mexican workers to the war effort and stressed that service records corroborated their long presence of more than 15 years as part of Chicago’s defense industry. Even during the war, they stressed in newspapers that, “Mexicans are giving their labor and skills…” They noted that even though many were from the Mexican-American generation already serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, they also were representatives of Mexican identity.

During the 1930-1940s, the IPL became a real alternative for immigrants and residents who worked in Chicago’s railroad industries. Specifically, it aimed to solve the hardships of Mexican immigrants in finding employment and helped immigrant workers from all nationalities. As it happened in the defense industry, railroad industries created high demand for immigrant labor. Still, longstanding problems that had affected immigrant workers like the lack of legal documentation remained a concern for the IPL. Similar to Olivares’ story, the demands

58 “A message from the Immigrants’ Protective League,” February 1944, Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.8-F.85
for labor in the defense and railroad industries did not necessarily translate into job opportunities for immigrant workers.

Immigrant workers not only encountered hurdles with immigration requirements and restrictions but also faced geographical distance from Cook County agencies. Immigrant families lived far from the city’s industrial centers that became the focus of the IPL. For example, the IPL reported that a Mexican family who had entered the United States through Texas in 1919 moved to Kane County, Illinois.\(^{59}\) From 1927 to 1932 a father worked as a section foreman for the Illinois Central Railroad, and the family lived in a boxcar near railroad tracks a few miles from Elgin. In the winter of 1931, the railroad company closed, and so, he lost his job. As a result, the family went to live in a neighborhood far from the Elgin industrial centers. This family visited the IPL after other agencies had denied them help. The IPL indicated that since July 1932 the father tried to find employment and to care for his wife and children, but his search was unsuccessful.\(^{60}\)

By the fall of that year, he decided to apply for aid in the Unemployment Relief Service, as he could not find employment. He reported that they refused him because he failed to meet the residency requirements of Cook County, and that the agency recommended his return to Kane County. Once he exhausted his options with Cook County, he asked the IPL to help his family. He told the IPL that he pleaded for any solution to his problem that would not involve his return to a “condition at once pitiful and hopeless.”\(^{61}\) He added that, for him and his family there was no possible employment in Kane County, and he felt there would be none in the future. He

\(^{59}\) “Kane County,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago.

\(^{60}\) “Kane County,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago

\(^{61}\) “Kane County,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago
wanted his kids to be educated “… no matter the difficulties they faced,” and he said that even the poor quarters in Chicago were better than they were in Kane County.62

This family’s economic crisis was aggravated because Illinois’ relief organizations refused to find practical solutions to immigrant economic inequality. As a result, the IPL agreed to investigate the possibilities for this family with the Cook County Bureau Relief of Welfare. This welfare agency reported that this family could have only received service at Kane County and not at Cook County, which limited its’ services to Cook County’s residents only. The members of the IPL recommended that the family return to Kane County, but they also indicated that, if for any reason this family decided to stay in the city of Chicago, they could find them more resources. The IPL reported that, in this case, “transportation back to the former place of residence would not have hurt the economic recovery of the parties concerned” but that the immigration laws, which they felt were too restrictive, had static view of society. The concluded that Illinois welfare agencies were inflexible, and that they need to serve families who needed support adapting to the shifting industrial and economic order.63

The story of this Mexican immigrant family from Kane County, Illinois illustrated how the IPL claimed that unequal employment practices needed to be addressed as labor rights. They viewed new labor executive orders as models for the protection of immigrant rights. Many immigrant workers took jobs in the railroad industries because they could not otherwise find employment and a place to live. Immigrant workers, who worked in the railroad industries and who participated in the New Deal programs of the 1930s, viewed the IPL as a welcoming

62 “Kane County,” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago
63 “José María Ceja” April 28, 1933, “was appointed the IPL translator, helping the IPL to communicate with this family” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago.
supporter. The IPL understood that many of the challenges immigrant workers faced were tied to the labor practices of Chicago’s railroad industries. It urged employers to hire immigrants from all nationalities in the city’s industrial plants and stressed that employers should respect fair employment practices. Immigrant workers who had also migrated to work in defense industries were well aware of the services the IPL offered, such as attending to labor grievances, documenting immigration status, and investigating unlawful violations of rights, at times working with consuls to do so.

The IPL programs promoted social mobility for recent immigrants, fighting to integrate them into the railroad labor force. This organization worked on cases for immigrants of all national backgrounds and handling an approximate total of 15,000 cases between 1920 and 1940. In particular, the IPL continued working with newly-arrived Mexican migrants in Chicago, which was becoming an important urban area for immigrant community development and settlement houses at large.\textsuperscript{64} In response, the members of the IPL encouraged the IPL’s board of directors to hire full time translators for immigrants. They believed that larger changes in Chicago neighborhoods were due to what Adena Rich had called, “the almost phenomenal rise in numbers [of immigrants], ranking Chicago fourth among all states in the country.”\textsuperscript{65} In an effort to understand the railroad employment situation, the IPL visited many of Chicago’s leading employers, such as the companies of North Western Railway and the Carnegie Steel Company.

\textsuperscript{64} Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.8-F.92.
\textsuperscript{65} Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.5-F.57.
The members of the IPL sought to make sure that the hiring process and the labor conditions for immigrants were lawful and fair.66

The IPL focused on helping workers who had been denied work on the grounds that they had no proof of citizenship or residency. Even though growing industries like railroads attracted immigrant workers, the IPL noted that many immigrant workers did not keep records of residence when moving from county to county within the State of Illinois. The IPL, in many instances, aimed to locate documentation, so that workers could be readmitted into their jobs.67

In addition, according to IPL assistant director Elizabeth Wilson, Mexican residents and immigrant workers who worked in extra gangs on the railroads, had gone into the war industries where they earned higher wages. She assured other members that the railroad companies that imported contract laborers from Mexico under international treaty guaranteed daily work, as well as round trip transportation.68

Far from supporting repatriation campaigns, the IPL advocated employment for Mexican immigrants. In 1944, the IPL surveys gathered information about the challenges Mexican immigrant workers faced in finding employment. The IPL noted that employers placed heavy daily demands upon Mexican immigrant workers in the railroad industry. Mexican immigrants worked upwards of nine hours daily with additional work time in case of snow, particularly on the railroads, steel packinghouses and hotel industries.69 Some of the employers informed the

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66 Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), which in 1941 made it illegal for companies with government contracts to discriminate based on race and religion. This executive order established a mechanism by which immigrant workers could claim unequal hiring practices.

67 Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: B.8-F.85; B.8-F.86; B.6-F.75; B.5-F.57.

68 “Survey…” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago

69 “Survey…” Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago
IPL that beyond the hardship of the job they were good employers, and they had favorable views of immigrant workers. Yet the IPL reported that it was difficult for immigrant to work in railroad industries without housing or return transportation back to their communities in the city.

The activists of the IPL were also interested in understating how to better facilitate solutions to the everyday struggles of immigrant workers in railroad companies. They concluded that the insistence on assimilation was harmful to the morale of Mexican workers who participated in reform programs. From the IPL’s point of view, the choice to naturalize was an individual decision, not an employer’s decision nor an agency requirement. This position of naturalization efforts was not that different from that of Mexican Americans and immigrant organizations in the 1940s that denounced naturalization campaigns in inner city neighborhoods of Los Angeles.⁷⁰ As Mexican immigrant workers resisted these naturalization campaigns, they began to view the members of the IPL as advocates who empowered them to challenge anti-immigrant policies and to complain about labor abuses. Therefore, as I explored in this section, the IPL’s activism was not restricted to Chicago’s defense industries; it also attended to the social impact of immigrants’ lack of employment in the railroad industry, ultimately advocating social and economic equality.

IPL and NUS: Settlement workers creating alliances in Chicago

The actions of the IPL and other settlement houses with Latino migrants represented the early stages of civic organizing strategies within the Latino immigrant communities in

⁷⁰ See George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles* (Oxford University Press, 1993). According to this author, these attitudes of Mexican immigrants towards naturalization represented a way of protecting Mexican citizenship, both a legal and cultural category.
Chicago. As historian Lilia Fernandez noted in Brown in the Windy City, changes in labor and immigration during World War II drove reformers to the work out of settlement houses.

Working with the Mexican Welfare Council, the IPL encouraged community leaders to respect cultural differences but also to recruit Mexican laborers for the defense industries. This platform during the 1930s and 1940s helped Chicago’s ethnic communities gather documentation for naturalization and create community-building programs. Under the IPL’s leadership, the Mexican community organized the Latin-American Project and Mexican cultural night at the Newberry Library. These activities and meetings allowed the alliances to remain strong.

The IPL recruited social reformers, many of them social sciences students and workers fluent in Spanish to carry out programs with Latin American groups. One significant reformer at the IPL was Roblee Alexander. He was a representative of the IPL and in charge of advertising the services of the IPL while working on the Latin American Project. This project aimed to study Spanish-speaking residents from Central and South American countries who settled in Chicago.

The Latin American Project “got underway early in 1943 with the help of a special part-time Spanish speaking specialist whose duty was to handle all Mexican and other Latin-American cases in cooperation with other members of the staff.” Rich argued that the IPL’s interest in Latin American cases “was stimulated not only by the war conditions, but also, earlier, to a very

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72 Ibid, Lilia Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City; Chicago Tribune Sunday, January 22, 1944.
73 Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: IPL, B.7-F.84
74 Immigrant Protective League Records, Roblee Alexander, March 10, 1940.
75 “Comparison of Volume of Mexican Cases handled in 1942 and through November 1943”, Introductory Note p1, Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: Box 6 Folder 73.
large degree by the Good Neighbor policy of the United States towards Latin American republics." 76 Consequently, at the local level, IPL activists viewed the large population of Latino immigrants in the city and noted the growth of Latino Communities in Chicago. This is why reformers at the IPL centered on Latin American immigrants. They affirmed that “because the Mexican colony in and around Chicago is fairly large, and because the League has had Spanish speaking full time or part time workers for several years, it was inevitable that by far the greatest majority of Latin American clients of the league should be composed of Mexican” immigrants. 77

The distance that the IPL took with regard naturalization efforts in the city is notable. This approach distinguished IPL reformers from other Chicago organizations like settlement houses. Reformers also used the Latin American project to publicize the services they offered and noted that, “a further effort may be to disseminate information about the Immigrant Protective League among Mexican residents of Chicago and vicinity.” But regarding naturalization they stressed that this “should be done without giving a false impression of pressure on the Mexicans to become naturalized.” They wanted to operate differently, becoming a center where the Mexicans could obtain helpful information concerning community life. They emphasized that “Naturalization and legal services in connection with immigration and naturalization processes may be, and should be, brought out without special emphasis, as part of

76 “Comparison of Volume of Mexican Cases handled in 1942 and through November 1943”, Introductory Note pp1, Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: Box 6 Folder 73.
77 “Comparison of Volume of Mexican Cases handled in 1942 and through November 1943”, Introductory Note pp1, Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: Box 6 Folder 73.
the [IPL] services to the Mexican population of this area.”\textsuperscript{78} This statement was an important element of settlement activism in Chicago. It shows how IPL reformers did in fact pursue naturalization efforts, though not in a grand scale, and did not insist on naturalizing Latino immigrant workers.

Within this Latin American project, reformers like Roblee worked primarily on compiling information regarding data pertinent to Latin American immigrants’ occupational status. He was an active member of the IPL with many qualifications to work as an immigrant local reformer. He was a graduate from the University of Illinois, who completed the Foreign Trade course and four years of Spanish. He worked as a tutor of Spanish and vice president of The Spanish Club, and had translated two German and Spanish writings for the Translation Bureau of Chicago. In addition, he had traveled to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Canada, and since 1933, he worked as a foreign sales correspondent and assistant to Wholesale Export Manager Montgomery Ward and Company. The director of the IPL praised his experiences and achievements with the Latin American project throughout the 1940s. With his help, the IPL helped to bridge groups and families seeking information about the legal requirements for immigration.

Besides working locally with Latin American immigrants, the IPL recruited a cohort of Chicago reformers to provide and gather information from immigrant groups in need of work and housing. One example of such reformers was Myrta Garay. She worked bridging the IPL’s contacts with consuls from Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and

\textsuperscript{78} “Comparison of Volume of Mexican Cases handled in 1942 and through November 1943”, \textit{Introductory Note} pp3, Immigrants’ Protective League Records, University of Illinois, Chicago: Box 6 Folder 73.
Ecuador. Garay’s job was to prepare and present reports for the IPL, as well as to exchange information about services available for immigrants in the city. Her training in Spanish language and social services facilitated much of the work. She graduated from the School of Social Services Administration of the University of Chicago and from the University of Chile. Garay was a student of Spanish from Rockford College, who worked as an English teacher in Chile. She was also trained in supervised fieldwork at the University of Chicago. Even while working at the IPL, she finished her M.A. thesis, “Welfare organization in Chile.” At least on June 10,1942, she had worked with Arturo Silva, consul of Bolivia in Chicago and with the Colombian Consul, Luis G. Flores on April 23, 1943. In addition to these cases, Garay worked on forty-one cases of Mexican immigrants and residents of south Halsted area near the University of Illinois at Chicago. Both Roblee and Garay exemplified the transition of the IPL towards more broad interests in Latin American immigrants in the city.

Reformers from the NUS also participated in the emergence of local reform by working with Chicago Latino communities, and thus creating a social network in areas beyond the settlement houses. During the 1940s, the NUS had many reform commitments, receiving job applicants who had previously worked and volunteered with other settlement houses in Chicago. In one case, even the IPL’s director, Adena Rich, recommended Yaffra S. Baraham, who had worked at the IPL with immigrant clubs and who was fluent in several languages. Other

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79 *Myra Garay*, Immigrant Protective League Records. She worked with a Colombian engineering student from the University of Chicago and from Oruro, Bolivia, *Louis Arce*, whose family had lived in Bolivia. (Meeting on September 29, 1943). *Arturo Silva*, consul of Bolivia in Chicago on South Berkley Street, Chicago, IL. See Meeting with Colombian Consul. *Luis G. Flores* on April 23, 1943.

80 Area called West Side Mexican Colony, this location comprised the area bounded Halsted, Ashland, and Madison streets.

81 *Staff records 1940-1950*, Northwestern University Settlement Records at Northwestern University
reformers had experience working with settlement houses within the Chicago area. Settlements like the Chicago Commons Association collaborated with social reformers from the IPL, as well as the Association House. As I show in chapter 3, settlement houses like the Chicago Commons would prove to be fundamental in the creation of a separate working group of activists: the Latino Institute in the 1970s. In addition, applications from the human resources department show that settlement reformers transitioned over time, and that settlement work itself became professionalized. By the 1950s, they had found new ways to publicize the shared needs of new immigrant communities, especially among the new Latino population. To this end, the NUS began working closely with Puerto Rican immigrants, who arrived in the 1950s to work in industries and factories in the north side of Chicago.82

In an effort to build alliances between the IPL and the NUS, social reformers emphasized the need for expanding Latina/o working associations. For example, reformers from the NUS helped to develop local programs and opportunities for Latino immigrants and collaborated with associations such as Chicago Association House that, similar to the IPL, had a long history of working with immigrant communities during the depression years.83 The Chicago Association House aimed to reform the quality of life of immigrant and minority communities. The primary objective of these reformers was to conduct “settlement work consisting of classes for instruction

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83 The Association house was a neighborhood home created through a program of the Young Women Christian Association. As founding member, Susan W Poxon, expressed it was just “a group of 115 girls of the West Town area of Chicago” who established recreational and educational programs. In Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives.
in various industrial subjects and meetings.” 84 Throughout the early twentieth century, they had available living quarters and spaces for meetings, which also in “a short time the rented quarters became inadequate.” 85

This shift to work more closely with Latino communities, which began in the postwar period, reflected the demographic changes of Chicago neighborhoods in the twentieth century. The Association House, similar to the IPL, worked with European immigration in Chicago until the 1950s. The director noted how new groups interested in helping immigrant populations grew, in the early days, and the area of West Town, which was the community that the Associations House mostly served, was populated mainly by European immigrants. 86 The Association house directed its efforts to programs, such as English and citizenship classes, counseling services for new immigrants and residents. 87 Chicago had a rapid changing immigrant population, “over a period of about thirty years, the composition of area changed as many formers residents moved elsewhere and were replaced by immigrants from Eastern Europe…” 88 Chicago industries also attracted many immigrant workers, which used the NUS services and worked with settlement workers, mainly as volunteers.

As with other settlement houses, World War II created new responsibilities such as the need to expand social programs and problems, including “family dislocation and social disorganization” among immigrant families. As reformers expressed, the war challenged the

85 Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives, pp1.
87 Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives, pp1. “During World War I, the association “turned to local business for assistance….” By the mid 1930s “public agencies were carrying most of the relief load.”
programs of these settlements, especially lacking in funding and resources. The war also “hastened other shifts in the population of the area, especially the arrival of large numbers of southern whites and blacks from rural areas,” to which the Association responded by introducing new a “range of programs to serve the needs of a diverse a changing population.” 89

The Association House, similar to NUS, did not remain a neighborhood or settlement house, serving a homogenous population of immigrant groups with limited resources. The circumstances regarding the ethnic makeup of Chicago districts in the postwar period were quite different. In the area served by the Association House there was a continuation of the trends which had become evident in the depression years: overall decline in population, conversion of “the older structures to increase the number of dwelling units, and deteriorating condition,” as well as urban renewal projects that continued during the 1960s. 90 In the subsequent years, the programs and activities were oriented increasingly around the needs and interests of Spanish speaking people, especially Puerto Ricans who came to represent “the single largest component of the heterogeneous populations of the area.” 91 To serve Latino groups, organizations, such as The Association House, The IPL, and The NUS established alliances with other reformers, and together they operated within the framework of the Chicago Federation of Settlement.

During the postwar period, Mark Rachwalski, the director of the NUS until 1981, created a network of local social reformers and settlement workers that aimed to improve the conditions of the neighborhood they worked with, “a poor, primarily immigrant neighborhood on the

89 Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives, pp2.
90 Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives, pp2.
91 Association House Records, Chicago History Museum Archives, pp3.
northwest side of Chicago." During his tenure as director, Rachwalski concentrated his efforts on social reform in the West Town neighborhood and in the city at large. The editors of the *Worn Doorstep* viewed that, under Rachwalski, the NUS “expanded its networks to civic, service, social, and fraternal, veterans, and church organization as never before.” And although the area near the settlement remained primarily Polish, it was during “the 1950s when it became home mainly to residents of Puerto Rican ancestry.” As Latino residents moved into the neighborhood, they visited the settlement, and “they were welcomed by the settlement workers,” who invited them to participate in programs for non-English speakers. In 1957, Rachwalski stated, “immigration is picking up and we are getting an influx of Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Puerto Ricans, and some American Indians. Above all, he expected the settlement to welcome immigrants from all nationalities and repeated his commitment to “the common interest of all, by bringing all races, creeds, and nationalistic groups, teaching them to live and work together for their improvement and that of the community in which they live.” Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, social agencies in the Chicago area, which included reformers for the NUS like Rachwalski, remained committed to those values.

Similar to the Association House, this settlement worked with social service agencies, which were affiliated with Welfare Metropolitan Council and the National Federation of

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92 *Administrative Records*, Northwestern University Settlement Archives, Staff records 1940-1950, p.1. The settlement was located on the northwest corner of Augusta Boulevard and Noble Street- 1400 West Augusta, Chicago.


94 *Administrative and Staff Records*, Northwestern University Settlement Archives, 1940-1950, p.1.

95 Wukas, *The Worn Doorstep*, 67

96 Wukas, *The Worn Doorstep*, 68
Settlements and Neighborhood Centers. Since the Great Depression, they provided relief assistance and employment counseling to neighborhood residents and vocational training. In addition, the NUS distributed “food baskets at Christmas, provided emergency supplies through its food pantry and used clothing repository.” More than twenty cases of Latino immigrants, mainly Puerto Rican families, asked the settlement for help and supplies, but they also requested appointments to follow up with social services for their families. NUS aided families in need of food and shelter during the Chicago winters. Northwestern Settlement’s social workers and volunteers handled at least eighteen cases from the 1940s to 1970s. Application records at the Settlement archives highlight that NUS workers attended individuals, who needed emergency counseling and made referrals to social services agencies. Moreover, settlement workers made home visits, gave legal advice, and accompanied neighborhood residents to court. By 1950, the NU settlement had strong reform commitments and received applications from settlement houses in Chicago, including from the IPL and Chicago Commons.

Conclusion
I have aimed to explain how the Immigration Protective League and its alliances with the Northwestern University Settlement, among others reformers in Chicago, centered on immigrant mobility and working conditions, and not on the distribution of welfare services. The reformers I have examined in this first chapter included: local actors, women activists from the settlement houses, and Latino/a immigrant groups that were mainly Latin American immigrant workers.

97 Administrative Records, Northwestern University Settlement Archives, Staff records 1940-1950, p 2.
98 Application Records, Northwestern University Settlement Archives, Staff records 1940-1950.
These local activists from settlement houses created an inclusive model of reform that was valuable for immigrants and immigrant civic groups.

Their shifting strategies in the postwar era represented the early stages of immigrant rights activism in Chicago. Understanding these changes in the activism of settlement groups with regard to immigration shows how reformers went beyond assimilation politics to contest social inequality. IPL and NUS’s fights for the inclusion of immigrants in the workforce differed from assimilation and Americanization programs of settlement houses. As we will see in subsequent chapters, their stories are different from other social reformer groups in Chicago: the alliances of immigrant activists deviated from early settlement work and emerged at the local level in the twentieth century.99

Historians have demonstrated that progressive reformers promoted immigrant assimilation programs and encouraged naturalization, but I believe we must also look into how they operated with immigrant workers and groups.100 Above all, they adopted new frameworks in the postwar era. Organizations like the IPL and NUS expanded new reformist plans aimed at improving the working and living conditions of immigrant workers in Chicago’s industries,


without necessarily assimilating immigrant groups.\textsuperscript{101} Instead, they focused on developing strategies to fight for labor rights and contest the inequality of undocumented immigrants. Reformers, from the Immigrant Protective League and the Northwestern University Settlement, which in the early settlement movement embraced assimilation campaigns, became advocates for immigrants by aiming to reform immigration and labor laws. Their work is evidence of a long history of immigrant reformers in Chicago dedicated more to the social mobility of immigrant labor than to the conditions for assimilation. Voluntary associations like the IPL and NUS did not seek naturalization in Chicago on a grand scale; on the contrary, this group was one of the few voluntary associations that took the tasks of investigating immigrant cases seriously to dissuade employers from naturalization campaigns.

Throughout the 1940s, these settlement houses held civic meetings, developed volunteer and charity programs, and hence expanded collaboration among new immigration settlement reformers.\textsuperscript{102} With new alliances, they began to shift from the settlement houses’ model of individual assistance and assimilation to a broader focus on immigration advocacy, which included the study of immigrant poverty and reform, urging the state of Illinois to attend to the needs of new immigrant groups and families. Contrary to social settlement scholarship, these


organizations were not limited in scope. Like Lea Taylor’s idea, the settlement agenda must be understood as a kind of civic front that, similar to many social reformers, asked the state to include immigrants in the city’s anti-poverty and inclusion programs.

The IPL began to better define their platform and to connect issues of immigration with labor reform. They held the view that labor and immigration reform had to be addressed in order to eradicate inequality, since they are intertwined and not independent from each other. This change in the ways they contested unfair labor practices represents the early stages of immigrant rights activism in Chicago. After World War II, the IPL worked within the new realities of international migration laws. For example, U.S. immigration laws added new definitions and regulations of displaced immigrants and contract labor. As I will examine in chapter 2, the IPL developed lecture series and international conferences with the purpose of understanding the challenges of migrants broadly.

Although this chapter focuses on the IPL and NUS from 1930s through the 1940s, by the 1950s, they became the Immigration Service League (ISL). In the 1970s, the ISL evolved into the Travelers Aid Society, an organization that provided homes and help for immigrant workers and families facing abject poverty. Later on, organizations like the Travelers Aid Society and the Heartland Alliance For Human Rights and Needs used the settlement model of the Immigration Protective League. In fact, the Heartland Alliance model focused on helping immigrant groups and refugee families facing deportations and repatriations. Organizations in Chicago like the

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Heartland Alliance and the Latino Institute were quite similar in the approach to the IPL’s immigrant activism of the mid-twentieth century.
Chapter 2

Local and State Immigration Activism during the 1950s and 1960s

Organizations such as the Immigrant Protective League (IPL), Northwestern University Settlement, and the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission (SSPC) continued promoting immigration reform in the Chicago area throughout the postwar period. They offered services to newly arrived immigrant workers and families from Latin American countries and supported the inclusion of immigrant issues in statewide legislation. However, during the late 1940s and 1950s, reformers concentrated on issues relating to postwar legislation, like those pertaining to displaced persons or refugees after the war. For immigration activists, these were transformative years. From the perspective of the settlement workers, World War II was a turning point for the IPL. I argue that, from the postwar period onward, immigration activist groups like the IPL and SSPC shifted from a strictly philanthropic, local model to a more consistent and complex network of social reformers, who aimed to achieve immigration reform at the state level. These early immigration activists, who worked since the 1930, joined the professional world of social reformers and of professional social workers that since mid-19th century had tied immigration to problems in urban centers. ¹⁰⁴

This change was a step-forward in the relationship between social reformers in the city of Chicago and immigrant activists in the state of Illinois. During this period, reformers expanded

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¹⁰⁴ Jane Adams, 100 Year of Hull House, Chicago; Abbott Grace. The Immigrant and the Community: Chicago School of Civic and Philanthropy Grace Abbott Reader, Edited by John Sorensen with Judith Seleander (Nebraska University Press), 2008.
their professional alliances with other settlement associations like the Chicago Commons and Association House and secured participation in statewide conferences like the meetings of the Illinois Migrant Council. Thus, these activists worked on immigration reform at the local and state levels. For most of the twentieth-century, the IPL remained committed to work with settlement or neighborhood houses, until it began recruiting immigrant reformers to work with immigrants and with the families of displaced persons and refugees. In the 1950s, they had an international view on immigration, which focused not only on Chicago immigration, but also on the problems challenging immigrants worldwide. This perspective on international immigration stressed solidarity and international cooperation among immigrant rights’ activists.

This chapter highlights the different levels of engagement of immigration activists throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Here I am addressing the activism of these organizations exploring how legislation in the late 1940s and in the early 1950s altered the services they offered. Therefore, my starting point is U.S. immigration legislation and proposals regarding refugees, displaced persons, and immigrant workers. I discuss the work of the IPL at the local level, working with individual cases and addressing the condition of immigrants’ employment in the 1940s as the IPL employed an international model with regard immigration services. The work of the IPL during the wartime period was closely linked to refugee immigrants or displaced persons after the war, and this using an international migration approach. Then, in section two, I explore how the IPL formed new alliances with social reformers in the city that allowed them to become more vocal and active while fighting for the rights of refugee immigrants. The third section explores immigration activism at the state level, and it argues that organizations like the
SSPC helped to develop an even larger network of immigration activists and state-centered reformers. They created alliances not only with state and public officials, but also with local reformers. For example, preparing public hearings and study groups, as well as visiting Illinois migrant camps and correctional centers in the 1960s to investigate the conditions of exclusion of agricultural workers in the migrant workers camps and other work facilities. Some immigrant workers who came to Illinois during the 1960s experienced difficulties inside the migrant camps. Although, these were housing options for immigrants to live while they were employed, these migrant camps in marginalized areas were difficult places to live.

From the postwar period onward, groups like the IPL and SSPC created professional alliances and expanded their mission to include the variety of problems affecting immigrant workers in the State of Illinois. Thus, this chapter explores the work of immigrant groups beyond city-level reform and neighborhood settlements in Chicago, and focuses on the main changes of immigration activism, such as the professionalization of social reformers and Latino participation in state level committees. Above all, the SSPC centered on Latino immigrant issues and on the recognition of their contribution to the state reforms of the 1960s. Altogether, with diverse reform objectives, they helped to advance immigration activism in the state of Illinois during the 1950s and the 1960s.

**Immigrant Settlement Reformers in the early 1950s**

The IPL played a distinctive role in the development of immigrant rights activism in Chicago, focusing on international immigration concerns after World War II. This ultimately meant that, in addition to contesting abject poverty and unfair labor conditions of immigrant
workers in the 1930s and 1940s, the IPL also attended to refugee and immigrant rights issues. After 1940, the IPL had new responsibilities and faced new demands from the country as the United States entered the war. They concentrated on supporting international immigrants and placed an emphasis on the conditions of displaced immigrants and refugees. The IPL’s work during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s aimed to include immigrant families who were experiencing changes in immigration laws firsthand. First, they organized meetings in which they debated how to better help immigrants understand the new requirements of the U.S. Registration and Immigration legislation. Second, after the war the members of the IPL began working with displaced immigrant workers, which the director of the IPL argued, “altered the depth” of the help they offered. The IPL incorporated into the agenda new strategies like helping international wartime migrants, which was an approach that impelled the organization to help immigrants contest new legal hardships during the postwar period.

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the IPL focused on working with displaced and refugee migrants after wars and conflicts. IPL activists worked closely with these immigrants’ groups, providing them with individual services, such as legal and employment counseling. In addition, they sponsored workshop sessions and lectures with the purpose of sharing information on new immigration laws and requirements to secure legal residency. Social reformers prepared on the content of national legislation, and in meetings they debated the Nationality Act of 1940, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, and the Immigration and Nationality Act or McCarran-Walter Act of 1952: legislation that set the framework of settlement workers at

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the IPL. By 1952, the system of restrictions had repercussions for the IPL, as new legal requirements like nationality and numerical restrictions of immigrants changed the work of the IPL and the immigrants they worked with. New legislation required specialized work on refugees and displaced persons and employment opportunities for new settlement workers.

These immigrant organizations received many cases during this period due to the fact U.S. immigration laws continued to restrict immigrants’ entries. To provide orientation and individual counseling for immigrant families, IPL activists set up meeting rooms, like a meeting and waiting room. Immigrants seeking legal and employment advice from reformers used the waiting room, and from those days at the IPL, they kept in mind that,

[The director’s story at this time is one of a breathless staff, and a gallant staff, struck with colds and flu in the early weeks of the year, -still interrupting their work, -but stretching their strength away beyond its limit in striving to meet and help the tidal wave of people asking the advice of the Immigrants’ Protective League. For the most part, that room full of people is willing to sit quietly reading magazines until their turn comes. Some bring their knitting. The league’s staff is small…Thursdays and Fridays are [meeting] days. Appointments are two or three weeks ahead. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays morning are swarming days. The office opens at nine [am]. But in the little tenth floor hall in front of the elevators one finds waiting men and women on many mornings at eight [am]. The director usually comes at that time…]106

Immigrant communities used the IPL as a community center where they gathered information and obtained counseling relating to migration status. Although the members of the IPL continued to address immigrant workers’ grievances, they also began offering to families and community members important information about displaced persons in the war. The board of directors of the IPL discussed the additional legal requirements that were burdening immigrants, such as the new legal procedures in the eligibility for naturalization and residency the

Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) used for refugees immigrants. The director of the IPL expressed that, since the end of the war their work with displaced persons and families was important, and “it was as if a thunderbolt had struck the office of the League.”\(^{107}\) The IPL developed ties with people from other countries, and took seriously the grievances of immigrant families “…cemented through the agency’s immediate understanding and help.”\(^{108}\) But it argued that since the war, immigration legislation had many inconsistencies.

The IPL worked with a limited staff and during the WWII worked under pressure to meet services they offered to refugee or “displaced persons after the war”. The director noticed that the daily intake table of immigrants had increased in volume at the reception desk and that they had received a “heavy load of office calls from frightened clients,” worrying for their family members left behind in their countries of origins.\(^{109}\) Family members of these “dispersed persons” called the IPL asking the organization to advise them on how to address the new restrictions for all immigrant nationalities. The IPL reiterated that immigrants from “conquered countries anxiously asked what [was] expected of them as aliens of enemy nationalities.”\(^{110}\) The majority of people sought information about new regulations for immigrant residents and information on how to find and relocate their families abroad.\(^{111}\)

The members of the IPL focused on U.S. immigration legislation and in all matters concerning the legal status of immigrants. They worked with immigrants from all national

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\(^{107}\) IPL, Adena Rich was the IPL director during the 1940s and the 1950s.
\(^{108}\) Adena M. Rich, 1940 Report to the Boards of Director, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Adena Miller Rich Papers Section 2 Box 5-Folder 54.
\(^{109}\) Rich Papers, 1940s, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, Chicago.
\(^{110}\) Rich Papers, 1940s, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, Chicago.
\(^{111}\) Rich Papers, 1940s, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, Chicago.
backgrounds, including those that the U.S immigration law considered immigrants with “enemy nationalities” and those who had escaped war in Europe and political conflicts in Latin American countries.\textsuperscript{112} Regarding U.S. immigration laws and restriction policies, IPL activists helped immigrants reunite with their families and understand the changes in the registration system. For example, the 1940 Nationality Act established a new identification code for immigrants that could be eligible for naturalization through birth, and new requirements to claim admission as displaced persons.\textsuperscript{113} Similarly, the 1948 Displaced Persons Act authorized the legal admission of “persons displaced of residence.”\textsuperscript{114}

In actuality, this category of displaced persons allowed individuals who were escaping Europe during the Second World War to obtain legal residency. This legislation also applied to other European refugees and international migrants. Consequently, at the end of the war, displaced immigrants and refugees began to face new challenges in obtaining legal admissions due to the fact that the McCarran-Walter Act had intensified the scrutiny of newly admitted legal immigrants and refugees. The McCarran-Walter Act (also known as the Immigration and Nationality act of 1952) restricted the entry of immigrants who engaged in subversive activities.\textsuperscript{115} Even though the new immigration system offered legal gains and opportunities, it also extended restrictions to immigrants.

\textsuperscript{112} These immigrant categories or labels like “enemy nationalities” meant to refer to German and Italian immigrants during World War II, but these also referred to refugee from Latin American Countries that had claimed refugee status during the 1950s.
\textsuperscript{113} 76th Congress, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Session, (Chapter-875, 876) October 14, 1940.
\textsuperscript{114} 80th Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session (Chapter 646,647)-June 25, 1948.
\textsuperscript{115} Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 or the McCarran-Welter Act. (66 Stat 163); June27, 1953.
For the social reformers of the IPL, working on new immigration legislation represented a way of creating alliances beyond the framework of settlement houses. The activists of the IPL learned daily about changes in immigration requirements for registration and were quite informed on U. S. Congressional debates on immigration. Throughout the 1940s and the 1950s, they reviewed Congressional support on immigration reform. They kept detailed notes on new legislation. New bills in the IPL field were consistently introduced in Congress, as they noted: “fourteen more before the winter of 1949 and two hundred still pending”116 Particularly, several of them related to the IPL efforts. First, House Representative H.R. 391 was a piece of legislation introduced by Senator Dickstein from New York, which aimed to obtain waive fees for veterans if they asked for copies of lost citizenship papers. Second, H.R. 4857 intended to “simplify entry procedures for alien spouses and children of veterans, transferring arrangements from the United States Department of State to the War Department.” Third, H.R.3466 was legislation that was also introduced by Senator Dickstein, and that meant to extend the period within which “naturalized citizens must return to the United States to retain citizenship.” Although these were considerably lax legal proposals, other legislation, like that of Senator Summers from Texas, did in fact try to restrict the legal recourse immigrants had gained by the 1950s. For example, H.R. 4780 proposed to limit wartime naturalization privileges, which had been extended to veterans prior to its enactment, and prior to December 31, 1946. Latino service members used their experiences in the military service to gain admission as citizens under the Nationality Act. This demonstrated that reformers worked on both domestic

policies like veteran affairs and immigration legislation. Other legislation placed harsher restrictions and extended penalties, like H.R. 1525, which “provided penalties for aiding in any way the escape of prisoners of war or of interned alien enemies.” The IPL’s reformers, who during the 1930s focused on the distribution of relief and obtained employment opportunities for immigrants, in the postwar period, were interested in supporting new avenues for immigration legal reforms.

IPL’s members were constantly trying to expand their efforts on immigration reform and attempted to remain current on legislation and immigration committees. Reformers of the IPL mentioned during the Committees on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives by 1950, that there were changes, and new personalities of great interest added to these immigration committees. The House Committee had a new chairman, Representative John Lesinski, of Dearborn, Michigan, of polish ancestry, who had succeeded Congressman Samuel Dickstein, the longtime chairman, who resigned to assume his new duties as a judge on the New York Supreme Court. From Illinois, the House Committee had republicans Mr. Noah and Mr. Mason, and democrat Mr. William W. Link” from the 7th Congressional District, North West Side. He was brought up to Chicago from Swiec, Poland, when he was three years old. Still, the members of the IPL were disappointed that there were no senators from Illinois on the Senate Committee on immigration chaired by Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia.


Quite regretful, Adena Rich, the director and settlement reformer of the ILP, mentioned that, “the temper of Congress is not toward international policies” in immigration and naturalization. The IPL documented many Congressional hearings. Some of these hearings were held in February on the Gossett Bill, H.R, 3863, which proposed “to cut existing immigration quotas by fifty per cent.” Rich argued, “it [was] a shame that such a Bill should embrace at the same time, provisions designed to control subversive and deny admission to such aliens, with which everyone would agree, since implications thereby also extend to the other innocent aliens in the fifty percent proposed out.” In her view this legislation, which was never successful, “might be considered oppressive” and designed to hurt all immigrants who live in the United States, and exclude them out of equal protection clauses.

U.S. immigration enforcement served as a legal means by which to restrict the entry and movement of immigrants, distinguishing between disloyal citizens and disloyal immigrants. Historian Mae Ngai has argued that INS policies intensified the inspections of immigrants because of the presumption that they were disloyal to the nation and therefore posed security threats. According to Ngai, tensions about war and national security increased the enforcement and surveillance of immigrants. For instance, immigration policies strengthened enforcement and legal exclusion of Asian immigrants as well. During the Second World War, immigration


agencies suspected that many Japanese and Chinese immigrants were a threat to the United States. By 1940, the IPL had worked with Asian immigrants and had investigated effective legislation for Japanese immigrants. Mrs. Rich mentioned that, “so far, no bill with respect to eligibility for Japanese has been introduced in this… period. There are fine loyal Japanese in Chicago who long to be citizens of the United States.”123 She insisted that “they hope to have such legislation introduced [in Congress that] would promote international amity.”124 Although the members of the IPL insisted on creating social and legal reforms on behalf of immigrants, they also stressed their concerns about national security.

The director of the IPL explained that because of national tensions during the war the protective role of the IPL suddenly gained a sense of urgency regarding legal immigrants, and stressed that the “loyalties to the United States [were] to be guarded and appreciated,” which demonstrates that the IPL developed a close relationship with war efforts administration, in order to stay informed on registration changes.125 To further address Asian immigration, the IPL met in the Standard Club in Chicago, where they focused on congressional legislation that could make Filipinos and East Asian immigrants eligible for naturalization.126 We now know that such efforts failed to secure legislation favorable to Asian immigrants, at least until the 1950s.

125 Rich Papers, *1940*, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, Chicago, Box 5-Folder .54.
126 “Board of Immigrants’ Protective League to Discuss New Project” in *Chicago Tribune* June 12, 1946; “Immigrants Protective League to Map Plans for New Year Project in *Chicago Tribune* May 12, 1942; “Immigrant Protective League Plans to Assist War Brides” in *Chicago Tribune* June 13, 1946. Mr. Adlei E. Stevenson was another delegate to the General Assembly of the U.N.
This context set the agenda for future immigration reform, and the IPL and other settlement houses shifted from a traditional settlement house to one that practiced active social and legal advocacy. The work agenda of the IPL highlights the actions of immigration activists on topics of immigration and migrant labor reform. Even beyond helping refugee and displaced persons after the war, the IPL members explained how U.S. immigration laws added new definitions for all immigrants. For example, legal registration became compulsory at a national level with the Alien Registration Act, since it established new identification cards and work visas. However, uncertainties surfaced after the United States’ entry into the war. The IPL answered questions about providing documentation to immigration agencies and listened to individual concerns about how to self-identify on immigration registration forms. The IPL interviewed many immigrants in the waiting room and usually recommended that immigrants had to identify themselves accurately because the correct answer to this question could guarantee access to privileges and rights:

[The right to be released from registration under…alien identification plan, the right to be free from strict surveillance as to travel… to carry firearms, the right to exercise the franchise in the United States, the right to engage in the defense industry, the right to enlist in the armed forces, and the right to enjoy citizenship.]

This attention to immigrants’ self-registration was important because it shows that the IPL was not entirely imposing citizenship requirements, but letting individual immigrants decide whether or not to pursue naturalization.

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127 Registration and identification of nationality and region were the new requirements of the Nationality Act of the1940. Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Box 5-Folder 54.
128 Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Box 5-Folder 54.
The 1950s were years of intense immigration legislation reform. Proposed legislation demonstrated that the INS had established further distinctions between loyal immigrants, disloyal immigrants, and enemy aliens. The IPL, focusing on registration, argued that, the alien identification program issued “identification certificates to aliens of enemy nationalities with the purpose of strengthening U.S. internal safety and protection of loyal aliens.” Exploring solutions in the registration and naturalization system, they noted a broad range of grievances about immigrant rights as well as claims to a dignified life. To this end, the IPL worked on family reunification of naturalized immigrants, and targeted immigration restrictions for recently displaced immigrants and refugees. Although the members of the IPL did not work exclusively on naturalization, they continued addressing immigrant workers’ grievances in the postwar period, but with an agenda that combined international immigrants and local level immigrant rights.

New perspectives on International Migration: The IPL in the 1950s

The IPL advocated for equal rights for international migrants, helping them find jobs and contest unfair treatment. The members emphasized that international migration had to be a priority for the country, and that they needed to focus on reuniting families, pushing for legislation that would protect refugees. Adena Rich argued that, “the IPL had many cases of displaced persons who were unable to prove American birthright, as well as temporary visitors,

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129 Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Box 5-Folder 54.
who need[ed] to adjust their [legal] status”\(^{130}\) Rich’s involvement helped expand the rights of immigrants in Chicago.

In this section I explore how reformers like Adena Rich gave the IPL new incentives to continue fighting for immigrant rights. As the director of the league during the 1950s, she developed interesting programs, lectures and workshops to explore the local level consequences of the McCarran Immigration Reform Act. Therefore, in this section I argue that, as part of this new international strategy, immigration reformers became involved in local level programs and committees. This strategy integrated alliances between local level organizations and neighborhood associations. They manifested the need to include immigrant issues in the city’s reforms, regardless of national origin, and focused more than ever on Latino issues.

Besides offering individual help to immigrants, the IPL advised groups on the impact of U.S. immigration and deportation policies. After the war, the IPL recognized that it was increasingly difficult for migrants to obtain citizenship, and they also decided to help refugee immigrants avoid deportation and repatriation. “In our attempt to assist immigrants,” the IPL will entail correspondence, not only with [their] headquarters offices but also with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department.”\(^{131}\) In addition, the IPL provided welcome letters to all involved immigrants. They emphasized deportation investigations and provided assistance to relatives and friends of migrants who had been deported. The IPL frequently referred such migrants to the Chicago branch of the U.S. Committee for the Care of European

\(^{130}\) “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies at the office of Immigration and Naturalization.” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp2.

\(^{131}\) “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp2.
Many immigrants served by the IPL had families in Europe and asked the IPL to help them to relocate and contact their families.

When working with refugee immigrants, the IPL developed new partnerships. Not only did they work with community groups and welfare organizations, but also with the Justice Department, focusing on immigrant communities located in certain industrial districts of Chicago. Some of these reformers included both secular and religious organizations, such as the South Chicago Community Center, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the training school of the Baptist Missionary Church. Harriett Aries, a reformer from the National Council of Jewish Women and worker from the Service to Foreign Born Department, stated that, “this organization offers services, which included interpretation of the various forms which are required to be filled out by applicants, such as first and second papers, change of status, derivative citizenship, extensions of stay for students and visitors...” In addition, they had an extensive program for reuniting families by assisting those in the United States in preparing affidavits of support and applications for preference and non-quota visas.  

Immigrant rights activists included secular and religious groups that collaborated and created similar programs. The Baptist Church asked the IPL to investigate the legal options for immigrant residents, so that they could gain employment in the war industry. The IPL reported that during the wartime and postwar periods they had to prepare documents, interpret legislation,
and help non-citizens conform to new rules and regulations prescribed by the government.\textsuperscript{135} This collaboration showed that this was a period of intense work on behalf of immigrants, as these organizations had committed to help immigrants find documentation and information about how to relocate family members after the war. Organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women assisted people in the United States “to locate their relatives abroad, and through their international contacts they assisted persons abroad to locate their families in this country from which they have been separated.”\textsuperscript{136} The work of these reformers was multi-layered, combining individual and social assistance.

The IPL helped working immigrants and community residents secure work visa documentation. Reformers frequently received complaints from families experiencing difficulties in sending money back to their countries of origins. Also, the IPL helped to find the families of Polish Chicago residents separated because of the war. Still after years of residency, many immigrant families used the IPL programs. But the organizers from the South Chicago Community Center, who helped a large community of at least 33 different nationalities, stressed their work focused on individual assistance, helping “immigrants to adjust to the American way of life.” As Conrad Rheiner, a reformer from the South Chicago Community Center affirmed, “this organization was doing a particularly good job with Mexican immigrants, especially regarding their schooling,” because the Board of Education had provided no help nor considerations for immigrant children.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135} Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Box 5-Folder 54.
\textsuperscript{136} “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies…” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp5.
\textsuperscript{137} “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special
In addition to the IPL, other groups looked after the protection of immigrant families after the war. In particular, individuals and organizations asked the IPL about the requirements for the registration of legal residents and newly admitted immigrants. The IPL reported that some of these groups included various universities, such as the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, International House, and several colleges in other parts of the state. During the 1950s, these organizations collaborated, as they had in the 1920s and 1930s, advising community members from the neighborhoods about new legal requirements for naturalization. However, the IPL developed new relations with other organizations that consulted with them on how to address new issues impacting immigrants. “This whole venture must be regarded as an educational enterprise, and any contact made with these immigrants must, therefore, include an invitation to citizenship classes.” But they stressed that “this contact may thereafter include any other kind of services the social services agencies” have to provide to all immigrants.138

This collaboration also included the Onward Neighborhood house, and Lutheran ministers from churches in suburbs west of Chicago, which were part of Chicago Federation of Churches. For example, Miss Walker, a member of the Chicago Federation of Churches argued that cooperation for her organization meant extending the work they were already working, “helping newcomers into their communities and into active participation in social life.”139 By the late 1940s those efforts were to be organized by the IPL. As a result, “it was finally decided

138 “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp 5-6.
139 “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp 4-5.
that only one agency should be chosen as a referral agency, and [that] the Immigrants’ Protective League was the logical one” through which to channel settlement efforts in Chicago.\footnote{140}

The members of the IPL became increasingly public and active while establishing new alliances and associations in Chicago. These advocates organized a series of lectures addressing refugee legislation. Speakers at these lectures focused on socio-legal concerns, discussing topics such as immigrant labor permits and the reunification of immigrants with their families. The IPL prepared lectures on how to prevent the exploitation of immigrants. For example, Judith Cass reported that the members of the IPL were set to discuss other themes at the annual meeting, “[such as] the foundation of international friendship.”\footnote{141} The IPL advocates organized and sponsored these seminars, since they had experience with wartime legislation.

As advocates, they developed a lecture series, emphasizing immigrants’ wartime experiences and exploring how to solve daily problems arising in immigrant neighborhoods and communities. Mr. Lawrence from the settlement house, Chicago Commons, stated that his organization covered all the categories except vocational guidelines and religious services, particularly education and recreational services. Chicago Commons sharply distinguished from the IPL, as it operated more as a neighborhood house and education center like the NUS. At least during the 1940s and 1950s, the Chicago Commons helped immigrants with “programs typical of the people’s native lands to make them feel at home, such as spring festivals” among

\footnote{140} “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp 5.

\footnote{141} Newspapers identified that the speakers’ series were to meet at the Palmer House in downtown Chicago, on Chicago Tribune: March 20, 1944.
other things. They also had citizenship classes and taught all grade school subjects, civics, and government. Regarding citizenship exams, the members stated in a meeting with representative of Social Services Agencies at the office of Immigration and Naturalization that, “The trend is now for thought provoking rather than mechanical questions,” and that in the last ten years much improvement has been made regarding immigration examiners.

In those lectures sponsored by the IPL, activists addressed international immigration reform and established relationships with immigration activists. A lecture series, titled “The Foreign-Born and the Community at Large,” emphasized that the members of the IPL as social reformers should protect and attend to the opportunities and challenges of the many European and Latino immigrants arriving in the city of Chicago after the war. The members of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations attended these meetings, as well as the former Romanian minister to the United States, Charles Davila, who also had studied Russia’s role in the Balkans. Lastly, Rich discussed the living conditions of postwar immigrants, especially those who had been displaced during the war. They aimed to gain visibility for the group in order to improve immigrant conditions, developing the early stages of immigrant rights activism.

Because of these lecture series, we can learn how the IPL used public platforms to advocate for immigrants in need and to stress that immigration laws needed reform. They noted

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142 “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp 3-4.
143 “Meeting of Representative of Social Services Agencies,” Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago, pp 4.
the “important contributions made during the years by Italians, Greeks, Chinese immigrants, and other national groups toward furthering the work of the IPL.”\textsuperscript{145} The IPL indicated that it was important to organize an international committee on immigrant rights. Such a committee aimed to serve as a medium of good will and as a coordinating agency among the various organizations associated with the IPL, like the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children.\textsuperscript{146} Reformer, Quincy Wright, who since the 1930s had continued working with the IPL, attended the first general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, and she served as an advisor to the U.S. delegation representing the new international refugee organization.

The IPL advocated for more inclusive legislation regarding international migration in the postwar period. The members of the IPL not only organized local conferences but also participated in international forums addressing immigrant rights.\textsuperscript{147} They were active abroad and joined the International Congress of Private Organizations for the Protection of Migrants and the IPL, at the Annual Conference of Geneva, Switzerland. The members of the IPL held the view that the protection of migrants “can only be solved by international methods.”\textsuperscript{148} This position demonstrates changing ideas about the value of international commitment to the protection of refugees. The IPL adopted the values of the 1951 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which protected refugees by “allowing them to enter and granting

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, \textit{Chicago Tribune} on March 20, 1944.
\textsuperscript{146} “The Immigrant Protective League to Map Plan for New Year Today” \textit{Chicago Tribune} March 12, 1942. Participant Clifton Utley met in the Gold Room of the Congress hotel to discussed the IPL’s objectives during the postwar period.
\textsuperscript{147} Elizabeth Thompson, \textit{1960 Committee of International Relations}, Immigrant Protective League Special Collection, University of Illinois Chicago: Box 15- F.28.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Chicago Tribune} May 12, 1942.
temporary or permanent residence status.” Thus abroad and at home, the IPL continued operating as a community center, working to prevent immigrant exclusion, deportation, and unemployment.

The director of the IPL, Adena Rich, drove immigration reform from the settlement to the public sphere: in schools, statewide conferences, and training workshops. For most of the 1940s and 1950s, she was the public face and leading representative of the IPL. Outlining her duties at the IPL’s Board of Directors meeting on June 29, 1953, she summarized her work for that year. She had offered lectures and led study group discussions of the “McCarran Act.” She also conducted weekly workshops at the IPL, where the staff met to discuss the new procedures and problems caused by this new act. She also represented “the Immigrant Protective League at the National Conference of Social Work” in Cleveland, Ohio where she gave three speeches, including a lecture on “The Effect of the McCarran Act on Family Unity.” She also worked as a lecturer in Universities across the state of Illinois. On June 18, 1953, she addressed the Graduates of the Adult Education Classes of the Chicago Board of Education at the Simpsons Hall in Chicago’s Field Museum. These students, she states, were all immigrant students, “both newcomers and old timers.” Besides serving as the director of the IPL, she established a liaison with the Advisory Committee on the East European Fund. And similar to settlement

149 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [Convention of 1951, Article 1A (2)].
150 Cold War immigration legislation included: such the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. The Immigration and Nationality Act or McCarran-Walter Act barred the entry of immigrants associated with the Communist Party and identified those suspected of being formerly affiliated members as subject for deportation.
houses like the NUS and the Association House, she was member of the Welfare Council, where she served as chairman of the migrant project.

Lastly, the IPL not only worked with individuals to help them assimilate and obtain citizenship but also advocated for the international recognition of immigrant rights. Legislative changes in the United States offered the IPL a new platform. Consequently, IPL’s leaders became social and legal advocates, and they became increasingly involved with international issues through which to defend immigrant rights in Chicago. During the 1950s, social reformers emphasized the need to expand Latina/o working associations at the state level. But, as I will examine next, reformers from the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission reformers participated in the emergence social reform benefiting the Latino communities in the state of Illinois.153

**Illinois State Reformers: The Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission during the 1960s**

The collaboration of immigrant reform groups like the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission (SSPC) at the state level represented an important step towards the achievement of rights for Latino immigrants and the securing of benefits for immigrant workers and residents in Illinois. In this section, I show how Latino social reformers addressed immigration activism and inequality during the 1960s. In addition to local level settlement groups, reformers from the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission worked on developing migrant workers programs and achieving Latino reform at the state level between 1963 and 1976. This Illinois Commission, which was signed into law on August 21st, 1963, aimed to study the problems that face this

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community, and, based on findings, to propose viable solutions to the state government. From the point of view of activists from SSPC, “the presence of Spanish speaking people [throughout the years] had been palpable”; additionally, their valuable work across the state was recognized. They stated: “Through their work in the field and industry, they helped to mold the advanced economic structure which is now one of the strengths of the state.” Thus, reformers with this Latino-centered perspective aimed to solve a variety of issues pertaining to immigration rights: the employment of agricultural workers, fairness at migrant labor camps, bilingual education programs, prison and social justice reform, and political participation. And as I argue, this level of collaboration at the state level integrated a model of promoting legal advancement of immigrants with the increasing participation of immigrant activists to take state legislative actions.

Reformers from the SSPC were decidedly against the assimilation of immigrants. They valued not only their work, but also “their music and their traditions enhanced the richness of this pluralistic society.” One activist argued that, “retaining their cultural and ideological identity, the members of the Spanish Speaking community of Illinois [had] worked assiduously to become positive element in this complex social structure, making their contribution to the historical development of the state.” This Commission’s central objective was to expand this recognition of Latinos as long-term residents of Illinois. They conveyed that a “lack of

recognition made the Spanish speaking people an invisible minority."  

For the greater part of the twentieth century they worked under this reformist and Latino-centered model.

In that regard, the Commission created a working group that could propose new initiatives in areas, including bilingual education, migration, and housing problems. Some of the first members to participate in this Commission were Carmen Velázquez, Margaret Lujan, Jose Rios, Carlos Ruiz, Cruz Sierra, Dr. Jose Aponte, Rev. Ring, and Eugene Siwak. The first two reformers, Carmen Velázquez and Margaret Lujan, oversaw most of the work. They participated by making reform recommendations for most all the committees, while the rest of this cohort mainly worked on specific committees of the Commission. Over time, this group of reformers from the SSPC had dedicated to integrate immigration and social issues. By working with this Commission, they placed a great emphasis on state reforms that could include more issues that shaped Latino experiences in Illinois. They stressed that, “for the Spanish speaking population in the State of Illinois, the year of 1963 is of social significance,” and that this Commission marked a new era of the Latin-American community in the state of Illinois. 

They proposed to take requests from Spanish speaking persons, “who [were] seeking information about the various services available to them through local, state, and federal offices.” Consequently, they recruited Spanish-speaking members and bilingual persons at all levels in the offices of the SSPC.

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When the SSPC was incorporated in 1963, it had a quite expansive platform, and it established a new group that integrated state officials and Latino reformers. When Bill 919, an act that called for the creation of this Commission, was signed into law, it gave defining powers and duties to its members. They stressed that “society as a whole [was] changing and the Spanish speaker[s], as part of this changing society have changed from nostalgia to positive action.” The SSPC recognized that Latino migrants were “conscious of the crucially important contribution to which they have to offer.” Moreover, they recognized that there were many barriers to overcome. Despite the slow progress of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Spanish speakers, these groups were taking “more forceful action in the shaping of the educational, political and economic scheme of the State of Illinois.” Ultimately, the SSPC was committed to establishing an important dialogue between the state and Latino communities.

The SSPC argued that the Latino population could no longer afford to be ignored. “There are more than 450,000 Spanish speaking persons [some citizens some long term residents] within the State of Illinois, many of whom faced special problems in language, in addition to… problems faced by minority groups,” such as Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Cuban backgrounds. In fact, they argued that, “the State of Illinois [had] an obligation to these value citizens to help them meet some of the major problems which they [experienced].” But as I will show, these reformers aimed to enact diverse programs and recommendations on Latino advocacy.

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161 “Bill 919” Spanish Speaking People Commission, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
164 “Acknowledgements” Members of the commissions shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
This Commission committed to study the educational, language, employment, and other social problems concerning the Spanish speaking population of Illinois. They agreed on creating “study groups composed of members of the legislature or public members to operate under the direction of the Committee.”\textsuperscript{165} The reformers that worked with the Commission expressed that one of the harsh realities concerning migrant people in Illinois was that they were subjected to abuse and neglect by contractors and employers and viewed the housing conditions of the migrant camps as places of exclusion. “The housing conditions of the migrant camps, in spite of recently passed legislation, [were] still substandard.” To this end, the Commission conducted investigations into the employment conditions and laws protecting agricultural workers, because these were not improving “to the degree that will allow migrants to receive benefits presently enjoyed by the working sector of the State.”\textsuperscript{166}

The Commission continued investigating employment grievances during the 1960s and throughout the mid-1970s. SSPC’s members conducted investigations into the “employment conditions under which the migrant workers labor while in Illinois.” They accessed contacts with the Department of Labor “to check whether or not the laws protecting the agricultural workers were being followed by migrant contractors.” As they mentioned, “some of the findings were disheartening. Not all employers complied with the laws because they allegedly were not aware of the legislation” protecting migrant workers, and the Department of Labor had to enforce its fulfillment. They visited migrant camps, in consonance with the framework of the SSPC, but

\textsuperscript{165}“Membership of the Commission,” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.

\textsuperscript{166}“Study and Taskforce,” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp17.
recognized that they did not conduct many hearings on the migrant issue, but instead followed up on recommendations and investigations already underway.

**Migrant Camps**

One report from the SSPC depicts the experiences of reformers, who visited agricultural migrant camps during the 1960s:

[It was a beautiful chilly fall morning. And we drove along the road, we could see the green grassy fields, the golden hills covered with the fallen leaves. The sunny, clear skies, added to the landscape a touch of beauty and peace.... From the road we could see in the distance the farms with their small white houses. It was one of those views that made famous the fields of Illinois. Suddenly amidst this natural beauty, a fence, a graveled road and a crowded view of shacks on top of a small hill as if they were on top of one another...]

After a long visit at this migrant camp in Crystal Lake, in which they viewed the unsanitary conditions, they stated that:

[As we drove away an old lady sweeping in front of her shacks smiled at us and the children [waved] their hands in a friendly gesture as if they were saying... please return. The beauty of the morning turned into a grayish cloudy day. The road ahead of us looked empty and lonely. A feeling of hopelessness invaded us as we drove away from a migrant camp.]

They described the problems with these Migrant Camps: “The migrant situation in Illinois is a very crucial one. We had 22,426 migrant workers …and 191 migrant camps in the state of Illinois.” The most important ones were located in Hoopeston, North Central, Far West, and Crystal Lake. By 1970, there were at least “15,808 seasonal workers (seven months) and 6,518

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167 “Minutes for the years 1963-1973” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives. Fall Issue: “The Visit:” See also seasons and main crops of migrant camps, such as of Sault Village and Delta, IL.

168 “Fall Issue” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives page 1. See report on the physical description of the migrant camps and notes on the unsanitary condition. See also a list of Agricultural seasons and main crops per camp.
(year round residents).”\textsuperscript{169} The agricultural seasons created demand for immigrant workers to work on the main crops in the state. Other migrant camps in Illinois, such as of Sault Village and Delta, had seasonal workers from July to November each year, and some all year around.

**Agricultural workers**

The Commission sponsored laws protecting agricultural workers. For example, the Commission sponsored a hearing to provide a forum for the grievances of migrants and scheduled a visit to a migrant camp in Princeville, Illinois.\textsuperscript{170} One of the witnesses at the hearing testified that the biggest problems they faced were labor camp violations, unfair labor practices, inadequate health care, and the lack of equal educational opportunities for migrant children and adults. With this in mind, the Commission recommended amendments to several pieces of legislation including, the Illinois Child Labor Law, Fair Employment Practices Act, and Health and Safety Act.\textsuperscript{171} In one of the hearings, migrant workers stated:

[One of the biggest problems [were] violations on the camps that have supposedly been supervised by an inspector of the Department of Public Health, and still [had] existing violations. What they really mean is that they (the inspectors) just walked by. They don’t see the roofs leaking, water coming in the door, and mattresses with rat holes in them. I have seen it, and it was a new house.]\textsuperscript{172}

The Commission’s members expressed that this “testimony speaks for itself” and recommended to the General Assembly to try to appeal to a “sense of human dignity,” passing

\textsuperscript{169} “Minutes for the years 1963-1973” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives. Fall Issue: “The Visit:” See also seasons and main crops of migrant camps, such as of Sault Village and Delta, IL.


\textsuperscript{171} Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 18.

\textsuperscript{172} Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 18.
legislation on behalf of the migrant communities. They stated, “Only through such legislation, the conditions of neglect to which farm workers [were subjected to] be obliterated.” They added that only “through recognition of constitutional rights” would migrant workers could become an integral part of this society.\textsuperscript{173} To this end, the SSPC recommended legislation amending several laws.

The SSPC recommended amending the Unemployment Compensation Act, “removing the exclusion of agricultural workers from the Act,” and providing agricultural workers “earning benefits” only in the second and third quarters of the year. In addition, they determined that “migrant camps should be provided with a first aid station on camp premises and with a licensed practical nurse. The Station should also be supplied with information regarding public health, in both English and the primary language of the migrant worker.”\textsuperscript{174} It required that migrant camp operators maintain open recreational facilities and special outside play areas at “reasonable hours for the use of migrant adults and children.”\textsuperscript{175} During the 1960s and 1970s, they addressed work and housing problems inside of migrant camps, conducted public hearings, and presented recommendations and amendments to state level immigration reform.

For example, The SSPC suggested several additional amendments to state laws. First, an amendment to the Child Labor Law would remove exemptions for “minors under 12 years of age engaged in agricultural workers.” Second, amendments for the Fair Employment Practices Act, aimed to remove the exemption from the definition of “employee” persons employed in agricultural labor. The Health and Safety Law amendments deleted language, exempting

\textsuperscript{173} Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 19.
\textsuperscript{174} Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 18.
\textsuperscript{175} Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 18.
agricultural and farm employee and employers. And third, the amendment to the Workmen’s Occupational Disease Act deleted the exception from the definition of employers for farmer and owners.176

**Bilingual Advisory Committee**

Under the slogan, “Education, pluralism means educating the children in a language that does not alienate them from their community,” the SSPC introduced several initiatives to address bilingual education for Latino immigrants and residents.177 Although they did not achieve legislative success until the 1970s (specially HB 1223 and H.R. 1098 in 1973), from the 1960s onward, reformers from the SSPC worked to “create within the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Bilingual education, whose duty [was] to administer a new program in Transitional Bilingual Education.” Furthermore, with the implementation of this law in mind, the members of this Commission aimed to target at least 100,000 Spanish speaking immigrants that could benefit from state actions. Basically, what this Commission worked towards was the establishment of a compulsory transitional bilingual education program: “whenever there is a school district within at least 20 or more children of limited English ability in any language classification.”178 They explained that during the 1960s, even though “Illinois rank[ed] fifth in the nation with the highest percentage of Spanish speaking people,” the state

ranked 20th in allocation of “funds for federal bilingual programs.” These efforts largely benefited the Latino population, especially long-term residents and recent immigrant children.

When the Bill was finally introduced on April 1973 by Representative Charles J. Fleck, the chairman of the SSPC, the members were happy to gain the endorsement of the United Teachers Association of Chicago, Illinois Education Association, the Chicago Board of Education, the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, The American Federation of Teachers (A.F.T) and Adelante Inc., an organization of Hispanic American Educators. Besides creating alliances with state education administrators, the SSPC organized several workshops “to talk about guidelines for writing proposals to implement bilingual education programs” at the United States Office of Education, or Department of Public Instruction. These programs regarding the right to bilingual education in the state of Illinois had a transformative and ambitious agenda for immigrant rights.

In the process of introducing this bill in the House and Senate, the members of the SSPC gathered support from immigration and Latino activists across the state. For example, when the bill was first introduced in the House, witnesses such as Miguel Velazquez, Tony Vazquez, Patricio Perez, Awilda Ocasio, as well as in the Senate from Ramon Huerta, an Executive Member from the National Education Association. These specific reformers had a short-term involvement in the commission, but still secured an important collaboration with the House.

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179 Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
Their job was to gather research and planning material, and to make recommendations for future state reform platforms. One reformer in particular, Tony Vazquez, was a longtime activist for the rights of people with disabilities in the state of Illinois, who worked at the State Board on Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Division. The SSPC agreed that when the bill passed unanimously, 126-0, it “represented a clear triumph for Representative Fleck,” who worked from the beginning to gather support in the Senate.

Since the creation of the SSPC in 1963, they passed legislation on bilingual and secondary vocational education for Latino immigrant communities. The members of the SSPC changed the quality of life for many Spanish-speaking residents living in the state, conducting hearings and writing recommendations on behalf of migrant workers for future legislation. In 1963, the Commission also expanded their work to areas beyond education reform for immigrants. This Commission sponsored by Representative Edward Wolbank was created with the legislation H.R. 2129 “during the 76th General Assembly in 1969. This new law increased the public members serving in the Commission and duplicated its appropriations.\(^\text{182}\) By welcoming additional members and securing state funding, in 1969, this organization gained paramount importance for future legislation in the 1972 and 1973. They helped to establish an enduring body, a legislative Commission for the Spanish-speaking people in Illinois. These activists recommended H.R.1089 to this regard. The legislation H.R. 1098 aimed “to help upgrade the

living conditions in migrant camps” of the state, it was passed and created the Spanish Speaking People Study Commission permanently, and which was finally approved in 1972. 183

The Commission prepared extensive hearings throughout the State and “recommended about forty pieces of legislation” to the General Assembly “concerning several of the most urgent problem areas.” 184 These recommendations were fully heard and received bipartisan support. All of them were quite significant for immigrants, like the “bill requiring interpreters to help non-English speakers” when in court or in Correctional Centers of Illinois. 185 In a report, the Commission expressed that, the year of 1972 was one of hopes and aspirations. But though some bills have been passed and signed in their behalf, the expectations of Latinos are still not reflected in the realities of their lives in contemporary society.” 186 Still, they presented at least 40 pieces of legislation in favor of immigrant rights in the state of Illinois.

**Correctional Centers**

Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the SSPC made several visits to Correctional Centers in the state of Illinois with the purpose of establishing Latino Studies Programs inside prisons to educate Spanish-speaking inmates. Ms Awilda Ocasio and Elias Argott visited the Pontiac Correctional Center on special invitation by the Latino residents. “The first part of the visit was to meet with the Board of Director of the Latino Studies Program… They explained that this program had been set up by the residents and by free cooperation of ex-offenders as well as volunteers,” on behalf of Spanish speaking workers and inmates. In this meeting, they

183 “Pontiac’s Visit Workshops,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp16.
184 “Pontiac’s Visit Workshops,” Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp16.
185 “Pontiac’s Visit Workshops,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp16.
186 “Pontiac’s Visit Workshops,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp17.
expressed a great interest in establishing a “funded educational program similar to the A.L.A.S” program (Wings for Spanish Speaking Prisoners in Illinois) at Statesville Correctional Facility, since the program had no funds to make the programs cost effective, like cultural, vocational, and art classes. They expressed concerns about the permanence of Latino Studies educational programs due to scarce funding, as well as the lack of resources for students inside the prison system. Members from the SSPC listened to Pontiac residents, whose “main point was to stress their desire for furthering their education while on their journey for a total rehabilitation process.” They requested that SSPC “become the vehicle in helping them to identify sources of funding and educational institutions which [were] willing to a challenge of this nature.”

During the visit to Pontiac Correctional Center, members from the SSPC visited the Latino Studies Program, where they spoke with students and were able to observe some of them “taking art classes while others were engaged in issues dealing with cultural and rehabilitation topics.” By the end of the meeting with Pontiac at the Latino Studies Program, SSPC members expressed that they left the center with “mixed feelings, frustrations, new friends, and hope.” They knew the situation in Pontiac was similar to other correctional centers they had visited and investigated, like Statesville Correctional Center of Illinois.

**Stateville**

The SSPC’s report on Stateville Correctional Center in Joliet, Illinois, highlights the level of involvement the members of this Commission had to achieving reform for Spanish speaking...
persons in the Correctional system. “One of the important issues that were discussed in the first meeting of the Commission was regarding the status of the Latino inmates in the State of Illinois.” The Chairman of the SSPC Commission, Ben Polk, visited Stateville and first met with Phaddeus Pinkney, the assistant Superintend, of Programs and Professional Services.

The members of the SSPC visited the cell house “E”, where most of the A.L.A.S. Latino inmates were housed; however, they “were not able to talk to any of them there.” Later during the visits, these members did in fact meet with some of the inmates “for a brief period of time, when they visited the Building of the A.L.A.S program.” This program was a bilingual and bicultural program called Wings for Spanish Speaking Prisoners in Illinois. The A.L.A.S. program, or Wings in English, was “a project for fifty inmates selected from the Spanish-speaking population in Stateville, with an interdisciplinary approach to the mounting demands for prison reform.” By 1970, this program had at least thirty participants. SSPC’s members expressed that “were received cordially and warmly by the students,” and that, in the meeting they addressed issues of bilingual education when students broke out in groups. “Some of the pressing problems which they mentioned were regarding … the lack of an adequate number of bilingual personnel in all departments and offices in which the inmates have to be in daily contact.” The members of the SSPC Commission observed that the majority of them spoke Spanish as a primary language and complained of the lack of Spanish speaking counselors and

guards. From Statesville’s warden, Joseph G. Cannon, they learned that “as a group, Latinos do not cause serious problems.” Yet they did learn from the inmates that Latinos were sent to isolation more often than any other ethnic or racial group. They felt that “discrimination against Latinos is obvious when they go before the Parole Board,” and also they felt left out at the nursery where no bilingual nurse or doctor was available for them.

Similar to what occurred at the Pontiac Correctional Center, SSPS’s members finished the visit with a sense of disillusionment: “We had to say goodbye. It wasn’t easy leaving the Latino inmates behind us with all their agonies, their frustrations and hopes while they pay their debts to society.” As this visit to Pontiac demonstrated, the reform objectives of the SSPC went beyond immigration legislation; instead, they supported a variety of social reform platforms like prison reform in Illinois.

**Employment**

In regard to the employment practices, the Commission “heard complaints which clearly [showed] violations of Spanish speaking citizens’ civil rights.” In a meeting in Waukegan, many testified about unfair treatment and employment practices. For example, the Commission’s members learned that some small factories in the urban areas hired personnel on a temporary basis, and that employees were contracted “for up to nine months,” and then laid off.

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196 “Stateville Visit,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
for unjustified reasons.\textsuperscript{197} They argued that, “this was done with the purpose of preventing the employee from receiving the paid vacation time” that they otherwise would have been entitled to.\textsuperscript{198} Besides these hiring practices, they investigated Illinois employers for unfair labor practices violations. Witnesses from Waukegan testified to a specific case in which “a worker was fired just because he had left his equipment three minutes before quitting time.” This practice was questionable, “as in his contract he was entitled to fifteen minutes for the cleaning of the equipment” at least three minutes before quitting time, and that his contract stated he was entitled to at least “two warnings before being fired.”\textsuperscript{199}

The SSPC viewed the problem of illegal immigration within the context of labor employment, and argued that, “the Commission cannot find an easy answer” to the critical question of illegal immigration in the State, “as the illegal immigrants do displace other workers. However, if unfairly treated, blame lies not only in the worker but with the one who hires him as well.” The SSPC recognized the situation of illegal immigrants was a detrimental one, because “employers know that because an alien is working illegally, he will not exercise his rights as a worker for fear of being caught and subsequently deported.” Generally they considered illegal immigrant workers “an industrious group with good employment attendance record,” and that the most disturbing aspect of this problem was the role of the employers.\textsuperscript{200} Some employers did benefit from illegal immigration, as they could hire migrant workers at a minimum wage and

\textsuperscript{197} “Stateville Visit,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp19.

\textsuperscript{198} “Such as practice harmed the income of employees and forced the employees to go from one job to another. In some instances factory managers fired employees without warnings, which was a violation of contract Stateville Visit,” Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp19.

\textsuperscript{199} “Stateville Visit,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp19.

\textsuperscript{200} “Stateville Visit,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 20.
without benefits. The SSPC made three main recommendations with regard to illegal immigration in Illinois. First, they saw a need for “further study of the problems at the federal and state level in a more effective manner, taking in consideration a revision of federal immigration laws.” Second, according to them there was a need for clarifying what the term “illegal alien” meant. Reformers challenged the common knowledge that usually identified the illegal person as of Mexican origin. “This was not true; there are many persons who enter this country illegally from all over Latin America and the Western hemisphere.” In most instances Mexicans had to face racial stereotypes that incorrectly labeled them as illegal immigrants. Third, they claimed “there is a tremendous need for the dissemination of information in English and Spanish about the rights of workers, since they are not fully advised of their rights nor are they told where to go for advice.” In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Commission had recognized that the State of Illinois could benefit from programs financed by the U.S. Department of Labor to implement training courses in vocational trades and bilingual counseling services in employment agencies. These recommendations on the education of Latinos and immigrants made evident to activists from the SSPC the need to propose a more inclusive labor reform in the state.

Reformers from the Spanish Speaking People, from 1960 onward, worked closely with other reforms organizations, like the Illinois Migrant Council, an organization that operated as a “Vocational Manpower Training Program.” It offered adult basic education series to train migrant workers in order to prepare them for agricultural industries or any other trades.

council aimed to serve as “advocates of legislation that [had] been enacted and applied to the migrants.” The Commission members reaffirmed their commitment to work closely on behalf of this population. Together they proposed a Bilingual Advisory Committee and a Migrant Workers Subcommittee that could integrate diverse sectors from the state.\textsuperscript{204} Besides this collaboration, the work of the SSPC was substantiated by new amendments to the Illinois Migrant Labor Camp Law, which brought Illinois migrant labor housing standards in line with federal regulations. This law “required inspection of migrant labor camps at least once before the laborers arrive and at least once while the camp [was] being used.”\textsuperscript{205} Passing new amendments on migrant legislation allowed the SSPC to help reform the quality of life for immigrants in the State. At the same time, it permitted the Migrant Council “to pursue the enforcement of these laws in areas of housing, employment, and sanitation” inside labor Migrants Camps.\textsuperscript{206}

The members of the Migrant Workers Subcommittee included reformers from the Illinois Migrant Councils in Rockford, Crystal Lake, Chicago, and Aurora, in addition to individual residents of Illinois. This collaboration also included the participation of the SSPC’s Commissioners, Cruz Sierra, who worked as a regional Director of the Rochelle Migrant Council, and senator Daniel O’Brien, Margaret Lujan, Awilda Ocasio and Elias Argott-Castillo, who worked locally on migration services. These reformers, who worked with the SSPC, shared reform interests in working and collaborating with local and state social institutions. This cohort


\textsuperscript{205} “Legislation Previously Reported and Approved,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.

\textsuperscript{206} “Legislation Previously Reported and Approved,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
of reformers at the state level also showed that the fight over immigrant right expanded to areas outside the central cities. The director, Sierra had previous experienced beyond the Rochelle Migrant Council. Besides fighting specifically for the rights of immigrant workers and families in Illinois, the SSPC worked on larger issues affecting the Latin American population in the state, such as political participation, housing, mortgage financing, residential segregation, and police brutality.\textsuperscript{207} This Migration Subcommittee agreed to develop new strategies to increase the political participation of Latin-American leaders but also to guarantee consumer protection, education, full employment, and justice.\textsuperscript{208}

The Commission recognized some progress had been achieved with regards to Latino political participation during the 1960s. The Latino communities had become more active, and “were becoming more conscious of [their] voting power than ever before.”\textsuperscript{209} However, they argued that Latino participation had several impediments, such as the lack of elected officials, and the lack of proper bilingual information to explain voting procedures before the elections. “There is no representation from Spanish speaking communities in legislative committees as well as in the different administrative, judicial, and executives branches of local and state government.”\textsuperscript{210}

By implementing some concrete changes, the “Spanish speaking voters would be better prepare to make [their] choice.”\textsuperscript{211} Moreover they stated that, some problems were still impeding

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\textsuperscript{207}“Legislation Previously Reported and Approved,” SSPC Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.
\textsuperscript{208}In fact, on April 11, 1972 at Our Lady Guadalupe Church on South Chicago, the commission planned to endorse Henry Romero for district superintendent.
\textsuperscript{210}Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 28.
\textsuperscript{211}Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives, pp 28.
Latino political efforts, such as the “fact that the boundaries of congressional districts usually spilt up Spanish-speaking communities,” particularly in Cook County. Thanks to this Commission’s activism and legislation they created a state platform to fight for immigrant and Latino rights. They had to wait until the spring 1974 to witness the first elected Latina/o public officials. They congratulated the success of two Latino members of the Commission: Irene C. Hernandez, “the first Spanish speaking person to be elected as a Cook County Commissioner” and Arthur Velazquez, the first Spanish speaking person to be elected as a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

The Commission had several local members that shifted from working in the Commission to working in state offices. They argued that it was of vital importance that communication was established between local leaders and the Latino community. Several examples of emerging Latino leaders in 1974 are Daniel Alvarez, a liaison between the state and Latin American communities in Illinois. Alvarez, who worked as an Assistant of the Governor, aimed to unite the “Spanish speaking community.” His office was “open to any Latino in the State of the Illinois.” He said “any organization that feels I can aid them is more than welcome in my office.” Other reformers valued stronger cooperation between Chicago organizations and the state Commissions. For example, Felicitas Berlanga worked as a member of the Board of

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State Colleges and Universities. She was the first Latina appointed as a member of the Governing Board for Higher Education in the state of Illinois.215

**Latino Membership**

From the 1960s onward, state level reformers continued with an agenda focused on migrant workers. Reformers that shaped the agenda of Latino families and immigrants at the state level included Miriam Cruz, who helped to establish greater communication between the different Latino communities’ leaders and the Mayor’s Office. Her job was to identify the major problems that adversely affected the Spanish-Speaking population in the city of Chicago and “to identify ways and programs that would start solving these problems, by working together with the different departments and agencies in the city.”216 Although Cruz worked with the Commission in Illinois from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, she kept her office in Chicago’s City Hall.

Additional reformers like Enrique Loza, whose primary interest was to see more Spanish Speaking People working in the state, believed that political participation would elevate the Latinos Community’s standard of living. Other important SSPC members included: Guadalupe McDougal, a member of the Illinois Advisory Council on Vocational Education; Eduardo Mendez, a member of the Board of Directors of Illinois Housing Development Authority; Rafael

215 Berlanga’s slogan was *Hasta La Victoria Siempre*, (Until Victory Always) was a song by Carlos Puebla, a Cuban composer. Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, Special Collection Illinois State Archives.

Nieves, a member of the Illinois Parole and Pardon Board; Alfredo R. Ramirez, an immigrant from Corozal, British Honduras, in Central America. 217

Like Loza and Nieves, other important Latino members of this commission set the infrastructure for Latin American immigrant rights in the state. Three Latino reformers that exemplified state-level collaboration and this trend towards Latino immigration, empowerment, and equality were Tony Figueroa, Ruben Cruz, and Francisco Medina. First, Tony Figueroa, born in Puerto Rico, was a one-year old when his family moved to Illinois and was a longtime resident of Waukegan. He obtained his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering at the University of Illinois. Besides being the Vice-Chairman of the Spanish Speaking People Study Commission, he was actively involved in other community civic organizations such as the Puerto Rican Political Committee Latin American Advisory Council.

Second, Ruben Cruz, public member of the Commission, was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He was a producer of WLS-TV program Oiga Amiga! Listen Friend!, a pastor for Christian, Disciple of Christ, the writer of a weekly column in Spanish for the Chicago Sun Times, a contributing editor to the Everyman, a WMAQ-TV (NBC) program produced in association with the Church Federation of Greater Chicago. As a result of his background, he was appointed to the Illinois Arts Council and Spanish Speaking People Commission. His efforts on behalf of civil rights led to his appointment to the Illinois Advisory Board of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In September of 1971, Mr. Cruz was named as one of “Chicago’s 100 leading citizens and additionally honored as one of the five most outstanding community

217 Spanish Speaking People Commission Records, member lists in IL State Archives. 3-4
leaders.” Finally, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Renewal society and the board of Chicago’s Hull House Association, an organization affiliated with the Immigrant Protective League (IPL).

Third and lastly, Francisco Medina, born in Barceloneta, Puerto Rico, graduated in 1954 from the Fernando S. Chavez High School. He joined the Army that same year. After his return to Chicago in 1961, he became an active member of the Puerto Rican Political Association and Vice Chairman of the Spanish Political Alliance, where he was involved in enhancing political awareness among the Spanish-speaking people to become more actively involved in government. After working with the SSPC, these reformers remained active members of the Latino political and public landscape, and a central part of the story of immigrant rights activism.

This cohort of reformers from the SSPC combined a commitment to expanding education opportunities for Latinos in Illinois with a long-term participation in local and state associations. Two important SSPC’ activists with specific training in labor and bilingual education institutions were Joseph A. Terronez and Elias Argott Castillo. Joseph A. Terronez served as the Commission for two terms and was re-elected secretary of the SSPC. While working in Illinois, Terronez was an active participant of migration reform. He firmly [believed] that “the members of the Commission [were] an asset to the State,” and [believed] that they (Latinos) will pool all their efforts and abilities to see that justice is done for Spanish Speaking people in the state.”

His training was in labor union organization, since he had worked over 26 years for International

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219 SSPC minutes for the years 1963-1973. IL State Archives, pp 5.
220 SSPC minutes for the years 1963-1973: Francisco Medina. IL State Archives.
221 SSPC minutes for the years 1963-1973. IL State Archives, pp 5.
Harvester Company, East Moline Works. He was born and educated in East Moline, Illinois. Within his union, he served as Grievance Committeeeman for the Local of U.A.W.-C.I.O. He later worked for 11 years as the alderman of the first Ward of the city of Silvis in Illinois and as a chairman of Hero Street Park.

Likewise, Elias Argott Castillo was a reformer born in Mexico City, Mexico, where he graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Maestros as an elementary school teacher in 1961. Additionally, he graduated from Escuela Normal Superior with a master’s degree in teaching English as a second language. While living in Illinois, he worked as the president of several associations, such as Adelante, an organization of Hispanic American Educators, the Council on Higher Education for the Spanish Speaking, and the Advisory Council for the Ruben Salazar Bilingual Community Center. Argot Castillo was also a member of La Junta of Universidad Popular sponsored by the City Colleges, Illinois Education Association, and Spanish-Speaking People Study Commission. Before working at the SSPC, he was “involved in many Ad-Hoc Educational Committees in the city of Chicago and the State of Illinois”. He also was a lecturer of English Composition at the University of Illinois, Chicago’s Circle Campus. Argot Castillo represents the state level efforts to solve immigrant disparities. Working with the commission allowed local and state level reformers to collaborate on securing different rights for immigrants in the state of Illinois.

This collaboration of the SSPC with state level reformers achieved many rights for immigrants in the state. The members of the Commission outlined legislation favorable to

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223 SSPC minutes for the years 1963-1973, Il State Archives, pp 5.
Latinos in Illinois, and they especially aimed to secure employment for agricultural workers and benefits for immigrants. While studying and recommending amendments to the state legislature, they did in fact visit many migrant labor camps and viewed first hand the lack of progress in areas such as prison reform. They included recommendations to make it compulsory for correctional centers to have bilingual programs and workers. The activists from the SSPC went even further and promoted the political participation of Latino immigrants and residents. The different educational and reformers’ backgrounds in areas such as labor organizing, immigration, and settlement work, allowed for a complex interplay between local level organizations and agencies and state level commissions to achieve Latino-centered programs valuable for immigrant workers.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that organizations, such as the IPL and SSPC, helped to advance immigrant rights in Chicago during the 1950s and 1960s. Activists from these organizations worked both at the local level, addressing the rights of immigrants after World War II, and the state level, enacting legislation and amendments to state laws regarding Latino employment and education. Of course, most legislation in the late 1940s and early 1950s generated urgent immigrant reform actions, which is why these organizations received many immigration cases. In fact, during this period U.S. immigration laws had continued restricting immigrants’ entries.

The IPL took those cases seriously, and along with activists from local settlement houses, they helped locate information and took action advocating for the rights of displaced persons,
refugees and immigrants. Activists from the IPL studied and fought for pertinent immigration legislation such as the Nationality Act of 1940, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, and Immigration and Nationality Act, or McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. These reformers took an international approach to immigration through which they could create alliances with Chicago-area reformers, which I argued included collaboration with other settlement houses. This approach shows how local and IPL reformers like Adena Rich incorporated an international commitment to the protection of refugees. She helped to publicize the programs the IPL offered, such as vocational training and lectures on immigration registration requirements.

During this period, the IPL estimated that the problems affecting immigrants in Chicago were similar to those experienced by migrants elsewhere around the world. Specifically, issues like the family reunification of displaced immigrants and persons abroad were at the center of the immigrant work at IPL during the 1950s and 1960s. They also expanded immigration rights through city programs and agreed on distributing social benefits for immigrants in abject poverty. However, it was not until the 1960s and beyond when immigrant rights activists played a more definite role in the state organization of the Spanish Speaking Peoples Committee.

This commission helped to extend immigrant rights for Latinos in state level legislation. Latino members of this Commission collaborated with state level agencies and helped by legislating benefits for agricultural immigrant workers and services for bilingual persons in the state. The Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission secured rights for Latino immigrants and installed educational programs all over the state, such as The Latino Studies Program inside correctional centers. This program alone could target two areas the committee had previously
worked on: prison reform and bilingual programs. Voicing problems of social justice for the Latino inmate population and expanding bilingual services became part of the agenda of community organizations like the Latino institute, which I evaluate in chapter 4. But in this chapter, I showed that the activism of SSPC had a Latino-centered approach that aimed at the recognition of Latino immigrants. Still, their activism spilled over into areas of prison, education, and labor reform. As in the case studies presented in section three, reformers visited correctional centers like Stateville and Pontiac. They gathered information and issued recommendations that would eventually be included in state level legislation, such as in the Bilingual Advisory committee, which made available bilingual services in all state agencies and school programs. Moreover, with regard to immigrant workers, this Commission was quite successful, as they were able to introduce amendments to the Illinois Migrant Worker Act. After visiting several migrant labor camps, immigration activists from this commission did make recommendations on the overall functionality of these camps, stressing how they were sources of great inequality for agricultural workers.

For most of the 1960s and 1970s, the SSPC successfully collaborated with social reformers such as Illinois Migrant Council, and as I argue in chapter three, they continued attending to the needs of Latino immigrant population of the state, developing meetings and legislative hearings, visiting labor camps and recommending state action, which ultimately helped promote immigration rights in the 1970s.
Chapter 3

State Immigration Activism during the 1960s and 1970s

On May 3, 1979, Michelle Gaspar published an investigative report, *Chicago has a Migrant Problem*, in which she addressed the lack of attention to farm workers in Illinois. She asserted, “few people associate migrant workers with the Chicago area.” But in fact many agricultural and horticultural workers arrived annually in northeastern Illinois. Migrant workers picked a variety of local crops, including asparagus, tomatoes, cucumbers pumpkins and cabbage, “that were too delicate for culling by machines.”\(^{225}\) Advocating for migration employment represented a step forward for immigration activists in the 1960s and 1970s, as they worked promoting fair employment practices for farm workers and their families. The central objective of immigration activists in Illinois was to secure Latino rights and improve the working conditions of migrant workers. Immigration activism throughout the 1970s combined several strategies, from legislative efforts to local policy actions, which helped to secure immigrant rights, in particular for Latinos in Illinois.

Alliances of immigration advocates in Illinois developed an intricate interplay between state and local level actions. Specifically, organizations like the Spanish Speaking Peoples Committee (SSPC) (also called the Study Commission), Illinois Commission for Migrant Children (ICMC), and the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) set forth a multifaceted approach to solve the most relevant problems for migrant workers in the state: housing, education, vocational

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training, fair employment, and bilingual services for bilingual communities. This chapter
examines how immigration activism spilled over into other areas of social reform; it emphasizes
how Chicago social reformers advocated for Latino immigrant rights at the local and state
levels. This last point is significant for our understanding of Latino history because it shows
that Latino activists were not exclusively championing a national immigration reform at the
federal level; they also asserted immigrant rights at the local and state levels. Social reformers
and Latino activists helped to integrate broad issues of social advocacy for Latinos in American
cities.

The SSPC launched a new working group to permanently study the general problems
faced by Illinois’ Latino population. Under the name of the Study Commission, established in
1972, this organization combined several members, such as elected officials, private
organizations, and state-level agencies. By 1972, the Study Commission had new membership
and a new structure; they advanced the “Return to Action” agenda, which advocated for
immigrant rights throughout the state. As immigration advocates, they helped Latino immigrants
and residents improve working and living conditions. To that end, they planned and organized
numerous work subcommittees and state hearings. The Study Commission reported on the
myriad services available for immigrants in the state of Illinois. Subcommittees helped migrant

226 George Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles (Oxford
University Press, 1993); Alicia Schmidt Camacho, Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-
Mexico Borderlands (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Vicky Ruiz, Cannery Workers, Cannery
Lives: Mexican Women Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950 (University of
New Mexico, 1987); Mario T. Garcia, Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960
(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); David Montejano, ed. Chicano Politics and Society in the Late
workers on many issues, such as housing, fair employment, bilingual education, consumer protection, and political participation.

This chapter highlights how state level reformers expanded labor and immigrant rights with a more inclusive agenda. For example, the ICMC was an organization that during the 1970s had a specific focus on migrant children and families. The members of this commission became immigration advocates who aimed to provide state-level protection for migrant families in abject poverty. The ICMC also collaborated with other immigration activists in securing legislation that would extend individualized help and other services for Latino immigrant families, as well as prove bilingual services for bilingual and bicultural families in areas of childcare and daycare centers. The ICMC joined other organizations, such as the SSPC and IMC, advocating for bilingual legislation in the state of Illinois. Nonetheless, no other organization collaborated as much with the SSPC in the fight for Latino immigrant rights as the IMC. The IMC worked in the Chicago area during the 1970s, until the council members opened headquarter offices near agricultural areas and farms in Illinois. Similar to the SSPC, the IMC from 1964 to 1979 operated as a multi-service agency that worked to pass important legislation for immigrants in the state of Illinois. Like other state agencies, they helped migrant families and agricultural workers in organizing and reforming laws throughout the Midwest.

**Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) during the 1960s**

Immigration activists in Illinois not only sought state level support, but also established local alliances with immigrant workers and other civic organizations. The IMC represents the
work of the state reformers, who closely allied with Illinois immigrant farm workers. Operating since the 1960s, the IMC created a broad network of activism that combined local and state level action. The alliances they formed during the 1960s had some success in the 1970s. For example, the collaboration between the SSPC and the IMC led to the passage of legislation that secured rights for immigrant workers. The IMC, formed in 1966, was an organization that advocated for immigrant rights, and which in the beginning had a centralized operation headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. The IMC members provided services to migrant workers throughout the state of Illinois. As reported in the organization’s administrative records, the IMC included: “a competent field staff composed primarily of migrant and formerly migrant farm workers, all of whom were bilingual Spanish speaking individuals… [sic].”

Throughout most of the 1960s, the field offices were located in an area that had the heaviest concentration of migratory farm workers.

The IMC headquarters were originally located in downtown Chicago. The head office of the IMC was located in 1307 Wabash Avenue, and it was in fact a nonprofit corporation established through the cooperative efforts of the Illinois Council of Churches and the Catholic Council on Working Life. When the office of economic opportunity received funding, it was with the approval of a $1,041,790 budget, which financed a “6 week summer program consisting of child day care centers; adult evening classes; a 20 to 24 week winter job training program for adult males; and low cost housing.” The treasurer of the IMC, Rev. Robert Reicher, said “these programs aimed at equipping the migrant agricultural workers with urban skills in anticipation of

227 Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) 1971 Annual Reports. Illinois State Archives
the time when automation would replace farm laborers.” 229 Some of these programs covered the areas of Libertyville, Princeville, Illinois City, DeKalb, and Chicago Heights. Reicher said the council expected to open new centers for adult literacy and job training in those areas, in at least seven downstate municipalities, including Mundelein and Joliet.

The work of the IMC during the 1960s concentrated on organizing state hearings about how to facilitate Latino immigrant workers get essential social services. For example, they organized meetings concerned with the housing conditions of migrant workers in the South Cook County area. One of these meetings took place in September 1964, at the St Casmir Catholic Church, in Chicago Heights, “under the sponsorship of the South Cook County Council for Migrants.” 230 Much of the meeting was about studying the effects of “the... adopted war on poverty bill” had on migrant housing. Leaders of the IMC like Margaret Garrity, regional consultant to the Bureau of Labor Standards of the U.S. department of labor, prepared and delivered reports to the board. William Whiteside, Cook County extension agent for the University of Illinois, discussed the economic and housing conditions of agricultural growers in the state in 1964.

The Illinois Migrant Council intertwined local immigration reform with state level social reform. The council “endeavor[ed] to improve migrant housing conditions on the farms and was soliciting the voluntary aid of farmers.” Mrs. Inger said that, “when we hear Miss Garrity, we will know what to expect in the way of help from the federal government.” Whiteside’s report

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229 IMC Records; IMC in the Media; Plan to help Migrant Settle Permanently—Chicago Tribune May 11, 1967; Migrant Children to Get Special Classes, Chicago Tribune June 1, 1967. This process of automation was rapidly pushing migrant workers off the farm and into the factory.

discussed that the farmers needed better housing and services.\textsuperscript{231} This organization, which helped to lessen the burdens of immigrant workers, worked with other agencies to achieve these goals. “Each year, more than 2,000 migrant workers come up from their homes in the southwest United States to pick crops in south cook county.” The Migrant Council and other civic organizations attempted to improve the conditions these workers faced during the five months stay in the Chicago area.\textsuperscript{232} With these goals in mind, the ICM helped immigrant workers access many vital services, such as plumbing and better housing structures.

The reformers from the Illinois Migrant Council decided to help newly arrived immigrants and to locate resources and services. Immigrant advocates recognized that around “500 migrant agricultural workers could [abandon] the fields for the factories.” To that end, the IMC offered job training, low-cost housing and subsidized healthcare with the aim of enticing “migrant workers and their families to settle permanently.” \textsuperscript{233} According to the IMC, the objective was that upon completion of the winter programs, a trainee can either get a job such as a welder or auto mechanic, or enroll in a one-year course and train for more specialized jobs in the trades or public service. “Graduates of either program were placed through the Illinois state employment service.”\textsuperscript{234} The IMC’s budget was designated for housing. Reicher stated, “We hope to provide 120 families with assistance to build, remodel, or rehabilitate homes.” Housing was one of the severest problems for migrants. As Reicher said “As they make the transition

\textsuperscript{231} \textit{Housing of Migrant Labor to be studied: Federal Cash South for Dwellings}, Chicago Tribune, Sept 13, 1964.
\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Housing of Migrant Labor to be studied: Federal Cash South for Dwellings}, Chicago Tribune Sept 13, 1964
\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Plan to help Migrant Settle Permanently}, Chicago Tribune, May 11, 1967.
\textsuperscript{234} \textit{Plan to help Migrant Settle Permanently}, Chicago Tribune, May 11, 1967.
from rural to urban life, they often continue living in housing that was adequate for the summer but is inadequate for the winter.” Reformers like Reicher advocated for immigrant workers’ rights, as he continued bettering migrants’ housing conditions and agricultural immigrant workers’ quality of life.

Specifically regarding housing issues, the IMC collaborated with other local and regional offices to find solutions for immigrants and their families. Rev Reicher said, “There [was] a low-cost housing in suburban areas.” Migrants tend to settle there “not only because it [was] where they lived as agricultural workers but because suburban industrial expansion provided a ready source of jobs.” He added, “With the exception of Joliet and Chicago Heights, there [was] very little public housing available in the suburbs. The Cook County Housing Authority [had] funds for this purpose, but municipalities [had] the right to veto projects and [were] generally reluctant to have public housing.”

Similarly, Frances Sugrue, migrant health representative for the United States public health service, said if federal funds were approved that subsidized health care for migrants and their families would be provided for the first time this year. She presented the example of four community groups, two of them in Cook County, applied to the public health service for grants totaling $50,000. She said, “The money would provide the kind of care a patient normally would receive in a visit to [a] doctor’s office.” This collaboration resulted in better services and opportunities for immigrants in Illinois.

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The IMC also worked to improve the quality of education programs available for agricultural and seasonal farm workers. They aimed to involve the Latino community in their programs and publicized one of these training courses as “Operation Leapfrog.” In May 1967, “more than 100 Lake county adults with Spanish speaking backgrounds [were] expected to take part in ‘Operation Leapfrog,’ a seven-week course aimed at improving the educational level of participants.” 239 This course was sponsored by the Lake County Migrant Council and met in Adlai Stevenson High School, named after the former Vice President of the United States. “Operation Leapfrog was designed to help these persons jump over the language and education barriers that block their road to a better life.” 240 Training programs like this one allowed the IMC to improve the lives of immigrant families in Illinois.

Paul Reicher, the council’s chair, explained that this program could benefit the residents of Lake County, who “work in some type of agricultural job or in industry,” since more than 80 percent had less than five years of formal education. 241 Reicher added that many of the children would be attending schools in the fall. He suggested the IMC could provide them help in overcoming language problems, and advancing their educational level could lessen special teaching burdens of regular schooling. The IMC gathered support from the boards and administrators of both Stevenson and Freemont schools, which according to IMC, were “showing extraordinary responsibility for education and welfare of these persons.” 242

members of a similar adult program recruited the participants under the direction of James Bade, a teacher in the program.

Besides educational programs like Operation Leapfrog, the IMC encouraged all immigrant children to attend special classes. In September 1967, twenty students from migrant families in Illinois attended the University of Wisconsin “for classes designed to give them the equivalent of a high school education.” Immigrant children were selected to participate in this national program, which was financed through a 2 million dollar grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity. This federal grant covered 10 colleges and universities located in areas with the greatest concentrations of migrant workers. The Migrant Council aimed to prepare children of migrant and seasonal farm workers for the General Education Development (GED) examination. Reicher said, “Education was important for children of migrant families if they [were] to make the transition from farm to urban jobs.”

In these cases, they still could use the IMC’s Chicago headquarters.

However, the IMC recognized the difficulty of persuading the parents of prospective students that this was a useful program. Reicher said, “It means taking an income producer out of the family…while, middle class families can afford this, migrant families cannot.” It was not uncommon in their families for children of grammar school age to work the fields. For the purpose of this program, an agricultural migrant worker was a person who moved from state to state to supplement the available supply of farm labor. By 1976, Illinois attracted about 10,000

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243 Migrant Children to Get Special Classes, Chicago Tribune June 1, 1967.
agricultural migrant workers each year. Many workers picked beets from April to May in Minnesota, cherries and strawberries from June to July in Michigan and Minnesota, and tomatoes in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan during the fall months.

By 1968, the labor and housing conditions of the Illinois agricultural and seasonal farm workers were worrisome and complicated. The IPL reported:

[Migrant workers [were] leaving the land… Lured by the salaries in industry and the realization that automation is making them obsolete…Migrant workers [were] abandoning the nomadic life to be governed by factory whistles and clocks. … But in making this transition, the majority of migrant families [were] living in the same substandard structures of their migratory days- structures, which lacked plumbing, and, in most cases, running water].

To alleviate these circumstances, “Several agencies have combined efforts with the Illinois Migrant council to offer literacy classes for the migrants, [and programs] to overcome the shortage of low-income housing in the area.” These efforts helped them to find jobs and settle down. Consequently, IMC members noted that private, non-profit corporations in Chicago Heights were acquiring land in a far south suburban area where migrant families could build prefabricated houses and obtain loans from the Farmers Home Administration. “The program would serve some 300 migrant families.” Even with some of these options, immigrant workers faced setbacks. For example, “the fear of retaliation against the families by farmers or landlords [was] not unique to the migrant. These fears that a report of a violation would result in eviction [was] shared by the many agencies helping them.” With limited success, the IMC took action on some of these reported cases.

244 Migrant Children to Get Special Classes, Chicago Tribune June 1, 1967.
245 Migrant Worker Hears Call of Industry, but Home Is Still Thin-Walled Shack, October 20, 1968.
246 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
247 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
248 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
The members of the IMC encountered two main problems while developing solutions for migrant workers: relocating migrant families and providing options for unemployed immigrants. For instance, Cayetano Santiago, director of the IMC, stated, “Farmers do not want to talk about settlement here or automation.” In many cases, employers had to pre-approve the meetings of the IMC workers. Farmers dictated who visited the migrants, and they replied that it was private property. “If violations [were] reported the owners could close down the facility and nothing would be done for the people.”

That contact between the workers and the IMC was important, because it documented the conditions of agricultural and seasonal workers. Others like Dorothy Riggle, chair of the South Suburban Migrant Ministry, stated, “violations have been reported by many sources over the years and nothing [was] ever done. In the past, some families have been evicted, but the structure is never torn down, and a week later, another family [was] living there.”

Reporting on these cases occupied the IMC members during the 1970s.

Several migrant workers’ testimonies illustrate the work of the IMC reformers. For example, Francisco Lopez’s wife, a former migrant worker from Texas who settled in Chicago Heights in the 1960s was a home visitor for the Chicago Heights office of the IMC, mentioned that “she had been thrown out of plenty of places by landlords or farmers for objecting to the housing. I have been threatened with a gun.” These alleged incidents occurred while the IMC employed her in 1968. Mrs. Lopez and her husband worked with the council and the Home Efforts for Low Income People, “a non-profit corporation attempting to alleviate the housing

249 Migrant Worker Hears Call of Industry, but Home Is Still Thin-Walled Shack, October 20, 1968.
250 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
251 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
problem, that [took] migrants into their home for short periods of time until some sort of housing could be found…”252 The IMC workers were committed to taking the Lopez family’s grievances into consideration.

Local workers steered efforts to allocate resources and temporary housing for newly arrived immigrant workers. Mrs. Lopez “pointed out that because of the housing problem, the migrant council only helped 50 families to settle in the Chicago Heights area” in 1968. They reported, “Seventy-five people settled there last year and 100 the year before. We have to place them in some of that [substandard] housing, which is only temporary. [However], temporary housing for some migrant families had become two years.”253 Unfortunately, the state administrators dismissed many of these claims. The following statement resumed these dismissals: “The Housing Bureau of Cook County Public Aid Department cannot step in on building code violations because if migrants [were] not on public assistance, we have no right to interfere.”254 Immigrant activist organizations like the IMC helped immigrant workers address these problems. Katauskas’ testimony described how Latino immigration in Illinois had increased. Reverend Katauskas from Casmir Catholic Church said, “migrants [are] proud people, they are not beggars [sic].” In fact, Katauskas’ parish used to serve the Lithuanian community that lived there. He assured residents, “Now the Lithuanians have moved away, and the parish

252 Ibid, October 20, 1968.
253 See salaries in Chicago Tribune October 20, 1968, $10 or more.
254 Migrant Worker Hears Call of Industry, but Home Is Still Thin-Walled Shack, October 20, 1968.
mainly serves Mexican Americans. [But] it takes time, they work hard, do not want charity and [were] willing to work for all they have.”

IMC local initiatives connected community groups to immigrant advocacy. In 1969, George Gonzalez, an area representative from the IMC of Aurora, proposed the formation of a local council to assist in serving the needs of the “6,000 migrant workers in the Aurora area.” They reasoned that the need for a local council stems from the possibility that the Aurora state office may be phased out. And those local organizations were prepared to supplant it “if that possibility materialized.” In Aurora, they proposed that the council would be made up of migrant workers and area residents. In addition, they sought to serve both the immediate and future needs of the workers. Above all, the plan envisioned to help “migrants during growing seasons find adequate housing and medical assistance,” and also to arrange education programs for them and their children. Gonzalez explained that “Another aim of the IMC in Aurora was to break that cycle of migrant workers’ traveling from state to state seeking employment, thereby jeopardizing their children’s education and making life more difficult for them.”

Mexican immigrant workers arrived in Chicago from the Southwest looking for temporary or long-term employment. During the summer of 1969, most multi-crop farms in Aurora prepared for the return of large numbers of migrant workers. Victor Ayala, an IMC coordinator, expressed that the council was preparing for the influx of Spanish speaking migrant

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255 Migrant Worker Hears Call of Industry, but Home Is Still Thin-Walled Shack, October 20, 1968.
workers, who came from Texas and sometimes Mexico to find better jobs in the city’s western
suburbs in Du Page and Kane counties. Ayala explained “some of these migrant families stayed
in hopes of further employment when the crop season [was] over, but an inability to speak
English prevented the educated and skilled craftsman from getting a job.” Immigrant
advocates like Ayala suggested that agricultural workers in the Chicago suburbs needed the
services of the IMC.

The IMC helped migrant workers find places to stay and aided in getting them proper
jobs, and employing local level sanctuary initiatives while providing housing and shelters. Ayala
said, “We’ve even permitted them to stay several nights in our offices while they searched for
proper housing.” The IMC program resembled the IPL’s settlement model of the 1940s,
except that the social conditions in the 1960s had exacerbated, among other things, immigrant
unemployment. Ayala explained that the need for migrant labor also had been decreasing
because of the machinery used on the farms today, “but still the workers come…” Furthermore,
Graciela Bonitas said that workers inability to speak English and lack of education [became a
barrier] in finding good jobs,” which is why the IMC had set up a new education program in
Aurora. With this program, migrant workers got paid as much as $65 to attend evening classes
six times a week, while working in the “busy harvest fields.” This specific program was
designed, they argued, “to end the workers nomadic life and prepare [them] for better paying
jobs.” In fact, Eunice Kelly, a Du Page county Health department spokesperson, said the

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department’s community workers tried to educate and help marginal income families find better life conditions.263

Local reformers from the IMC asked the state to intervene by expanding migration housing opportunities and safety conditions. Ruth Johnson, a Kane county Office of Employment Opportunity employee who worked directly with migrant programs, advocated legislation for migrant workers. She asked, “Do you realize that the Mexican government requires that American farmers utilizing migrant help from Mexico furnish the workers with a certain standard of housing and wage?” She stressed that “the Spanish speaking migrant workers from Texas and the border areas [were] afforded no protection of the U.S. government and migrant workers, who come to this area to work….The farmer cannot and would not afford the Mexican migrant and there [was] a definite need for legislation in this country for their protection.”264 By 1969, the IMC as an organization had made important changes; they shifted from working on immigrant state organization and communities in Chicago to expanding their efforts into local immigrant communities in central Illinois.

**Latino Study Commission during the 1970s**

State and local activists helped to develop an agenda of immigrant rights activism in the state of Illinois. Similar to the IMC, the SSPC, then called The Study Commission, continued this activism through state level cooperation and advocating for bilingual and vocational education for migrant workers. Although they had started fighting for the rights of migrant

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workers early on in the 1960s, throughout the 1970s they adopted new reform objectives. The Study Commission divided the work into several subcommittees to provide an overview of the current conditions of Latino immigrant workers and make relevant recommendations to solve the employment problems of agricultural workers. As small subcommittee groups met on diverse issues during the 1970s, they shared information and collaborated with state agencies. They organized and developed state hearings and worked in several subcommittees addressing witnesses and in the case of the SSPC, they met with elected officials and recommended members to the Study Commission.

Migration advocates sought new sources of state action. On September 10, 1971, the Illinois House passed H.R. 1098; a bill that expanded the realm of the SSPC and that transformed the agenda of the SSPC into a Study Commission to develop state subcommittees as focus groups. This second Commission aimed to study Latino issues such as language, bilingual education, employment, and other areas of concern. For that reason, the members of the SSPC separated into several subcommittees responding to the needs of Latino communities in Illinois. From this point onward, the Commission experienced several changes in its membership. For example, one of the outstanding recommendations made by the second Commission was the establishment of a permanent body, a Legislative Commission for the Spanish-Speaking. The new changes were structural and institutional. In the third Commission there was a reduction of public members from eight to four. The number of elected officials remained at six. From the Senate, Daniel O’Brien, Frank D. Savickas and Senator Karl Berning were appointed. From the House, representatives Charles J. Fleck Jr., Louis Janczack and Robert L. Thompson were
appointed. The public members were: Margaret Luján, Raul Torres, Francisco Medina and Cruz T. Sierra.\textsuperscript{265}

Local reformers hoped that, with a new membership, this Commission could focus on enacting state level legislation favorable to Latino immigrants. The SSPC suggested laws or revision of existing laws to attempt to meet and solve the problems that were to be recommended. Also, for the purpose of identifying problems or concerns, they held public hearings. They proposed “groups and individuals also send letters or material to the Commission’s office on problems or concerns that bothered them.” In fact throughout the 1970s, the hearing results and other reports were studied by the Commission which decided what items should be included in the reports and which legislative proposals to make. They still recognized that everything presented could not be taken care of and some issues were often handled by different study Commissioner.\textsuperscript{266} The new focus of the SSPC was to gather enough data to submit recommendations to legislators and to work with other immigrant organizations. Of course, this Commission cooperated with other Commissions as well as shared data and reports. After legislation was introduced, Commission members worked to gain support and votes to try to pass the bills. They argued, “That’s about all the Commission could do, draft legislation and try to get it to pass.” However, with some limitations, this Commission was unable to make arbitrary changes in school policies, funding, job or housing conditions. They aimed to “build


\textsuperscript{266} Ibid, SSPC, \textit{July Issue 1970}. 
support in order to pass legislation.”

Even with internal weaknesses, the SSPC members remained committed to passing legislation and to developing public policy.

This Commission embraced a Latino recuperative project in Illinois. In July of 1970, the SSPC presented the Committee’s rights and duties. They stated that, “Except for a brief session this fall, the 77th General Assembly is history… It is a history that marks a new beginning, for the Spanish-speaking people of our state.” And referring to their recuperative project, they claimed that, “The 1818 constitution had contained strong linguistic prejudices which were picked up in both the constitutions of 1848 and 1870.” They were convinced that it was only with the adoption of the 1970 constitution that real progress could be made toward providing justice to the Spanish-speaking people of Illinois. The 77th General Assembly, responding to the Spanish Speaking Peoples Study Commission, “passed a good many laws which shifted public policy in the state to the point that the direction is now to give greater recognition to out Spanish speakers’ citizenry.” The 1970s were the most productive years of the SSPC and the Study Commission, as they incorporated additional reform objectives to assist Latino immigrants.

Similar to the objective of the IMC, the study Commission intended to expand Latino employment opportunities in the state. They aimed “to provide service of the state, all state agencies [were] now required to employ persons with both linguistic ability and cultural background to serve the Spanish speaking even if it should prove necessary to create new occupational titles.” In addition they aimed “to provide more employment, licenses for barbers,

beauty operators, tree experts, and automobile drivers are now provided in Spanish.”\textsuperscript{270} In the state, they intended to impart justice to migrants; prospective employers were now required “to provide decent housing and to list the terms and conditions of work they are offering with the state.”\textsuperscript{271} The workers’ compensation laws then protected migrants and day care was provided for their children. These new regulations and achieved immigrant rights delimited the work of the Commission.

The SSPC began considering immigration reform broadly to include social aspects as well. Advocating for bilingual programs and bilingual training since the 1960s, the SSPC proposed “to improve the education, of our children and adults high school equivalency test [were then] given in Spanish.” By the 1970s, all counties in Illinois were required to provide language interpreters in the court system for those who did not speak English.\textsuperscript{272} In addition, they aimed to provide legal representation for Latinos by persons who themselves shared a Hispanic heritage.\textsuperscript{273} They gathered the support of the Illinois Governor:

\begin{quote}
[As Governor Ogilvie said when he signed these bills into law, this is but a partial payment on the debt long overdue.” He stated that “its [was] now the duty of the Commission and its sub-Committees to provide the follow up recommendations to the 78th General Assembly. The Governor had pledged his support; the legislators are now disposed to look favorably on our recommendations. It now remains for us to present our understanding and our sensitivity to problems that we know still persist in order that the world of our children grow up in will treat them more kindly that the world in which we have struggled.]\textsuperscript{274}
\end{quote}

In several meetings the Study Commission agreed “to secure a valid assessment of Illinois policies” that impacted Spanish-speaking citizens and secured sound proposals for the

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid, SSPC, July Issue 1970.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid, SSPC, July Issue 1970.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid, SSPC, July Issue 1970.
\textsuperscript{273} SSPC Records “Spanish Speaking People study Commission had been created with 60,000.00 appropriated funds for its first two years.”
\textsuperscript{274} SSPC Records, Study Commission,1.
alleviation of adverse conditions. Senator Daniel P. O’Brien, chair of the SSPC of Illinois General Assembly, had to appoint “knowledgeable and public spirited citizens to a series of subcommittees each of which will investigate a specified topical area.” Senator O’Brien was elected chair of the SSPC Study Commission of the state legislature. He replaced state representative Arthur A. Teleser [Republican, 11th district], who from the late 1960s to the early 1970s led the SSPC in “pushing thru the General Assembly eighteen bills to benefit the state’s second largest minority.” Since 1969, the fourteen-member commission studied the problems of urban and rural Latino communities and to recommend legislation in Illinois. Some of these bills proposed to help Latino communities in the areas of health, education, housing, employment, consumer protection, political representation, migrant workers, and justice and police protection. In 1972, the study commission had been one of the most active groups of the General Assembly and the “goal was to push through remaining bills and propose others for the benefit of Spanish speaking persons.” Those bills included House Bill 1087 which would eliminate residency requirements for welfare applicants; House Bill 1082 which preferred the election rather than appointment of the community conservation council members; House Bill 1073, which would “provide unemployment compensation for agricultural workers,” and other bills that aimed to extend benefits to persons engaged in agricultural labor.

275 SSPC Records Study Commission, 1.
To that end, they set up subcommittees to focus on these specific problems and continued to be active throughout the 1970s. This Study Commission organized the following subcommittees: employment, migrant problems, housing, education, political representation, consumer’s protection, justice and police, and health and welfare. The membership of each subcommittee was organized internally by each subcommittee’s chair. The staff members in these subcommittees were Latino community members “including persons with a record of activity, interest and/or expertise in the subject.”

Similar to settlement activists, the SSPC reformers built on voluntary associations and collaboration of immigrant groups. Following the same format as the 1960s hearings, “Each subcommittee [was] presided over by one of the members of the Commission. This person [was] selected by Senator O’Brien.” In addition most subcommittees chose a vice chair to preside over meetings in which the chairman was unable to attend, and a secretary. In some instances the secretary was a member of the subcommittee, while in others the secretary was a college student volunteer. These volunteers did not have a vote on the subcommittee, nor were they paid for their work. But the expenses in the performance of their duties were compensated. The SSPC members documented their work and kept detailed records of all their meetings and hearings.

The state workers of the SSPC set the agenda of the subcommittees. For instance, each Committee was asked first to examine the work of administrative agencies in implementing legislation already enacted and report its findings to the Commission. Second, they were expected to explore and evaluate the needs of the Spanish Speaking community in its own area.

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280 SSPC Records, Study Commission, 1.
281 SSPC Records, Study Commission, 1.
of interest. Third, they envisioned preparing a document embodying the recommendations for the Commission. A preliminary outline of this document was due on June 30, 1972 and a final version on September 15, 1972.\textsuperscript{282}

The subcommittee members used all the available and local resources to complete the 1970s immigration reform agenda. The SSPC members stated, “the primary tool that [was] available to each subcommittee was the combined experienced and expertise of subcommittee members.” In addition, members may be provided from time to time with background papers, government reports and the results of staff investigation and research. The SSPC subcommittee conducted their own investigations through interviews with public officials, individual research and public hearings. Generally speaking, public hearings did not “prove fruitful unless a great amount of staff work has gone into them.” This is why, should the subcommittee decide to undertake such a hearing, members were requested to plan them well in advance and to consult with staff so that the necessary preparation and follow up work may be accomplished.\textsuperscript{283} To that end, the SSPC members aimed to prepare effective subcommittee hearings.

The SSPC provided some flexibility over the work schedule and timetable of the subcommittees. All subcommittee members were free to plan and schedule their meetings. They should, however, “keep the office advised as to meetings and other projects undertaken.”\textsuperscript{284} Also, members verified that all minutes were published in accordance with the rules of the

\textsuperscript{282} SSPC Records, \textit{Study Commission}, 1. See summary of public policies with changes and with reasons for recommendations and suggestions.

\textsuperscript{283} SSPC Records, \textit{Study Commission} 1, Subcommittee minutes of January 28, 1972.

\textsuperscript{284} SSPC Records, \textit{Study Commission} 1, Subcommittee minutes of January 28, 1972.
Commission and exercised prudence with regard to “budgetary limitations on travel and expenses.”\textsuperscript{285} In fact, throughout the 1970s, the SSPC faced more budgetary constraints.

The subcommittees exercised independent efforts that would take state action on behalf of Latino immigration in Illinois. From February to April of 1972, the SSPC held four important meetings on the subcommittees of health and welfare, consumer’s protection, justice and police, bilingual education, and political participation. First, on March 11, 1972, the SSPC’s Health and Welfare Subcommittee met to discuss the main areas of concerns. One of the committee members, Raul Torres called the meeting and stressed that “by a majority of votes” they voted “that this and all future meetings would be held in the Spanish language.” Torres resumed the meeting, by advising the members of the subcommittees on the problems of previous year.\textsuperscript{286} They answered questions regarding bills, especially the SSPC’s 1971 report to the 77\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly.

Local immigration reformers collaborated with Illinois State elected officials. At the meeting: “Senator O’Brien and John Kearney paid a visit to the committee and [O’Brien] opened his speech with a warm welcome and thanks to the members present for their interest.”\textsuperscript{287} He explained the purpose of the commissions and its subcommittees. The committee members presented their questions to the Senator. Then, Mr. Toledo, a member of the Study Commission and who had worked with Latino organizations, questioned the need of advising the Spanish speaking organizations of the bills passed and pending and, therefore, he requested that a report

\textsuperscript{285} SSPC Records, Study Commission 1, Subcommittee minutes of January 28, 1972.
\textsuperscript{286} SSPC Records, subcommittee on Health and Welfare. SSPC, March 11, 1972.
\textsuperscript{287} SSPC Records, subcommittee on Health and Welfare. SSPC, March 11, 1972.
be sent to these organizations regarding the bills, and that they in turn will advise the Spanish-speaking residents they come in contact with. In his reply, Senator O’Brien agreed to “the need of advising Spanish speaking organizations” on state bills. He took partial blame on behalf of the Commission. However, he also suggested that the news media should advise the commission of such information, because they were not giving enough attention to the commission.

Part of the social reform agenda centered on protecting Latino civic groups and business interests. On March 11, 1972, the Study Commission met to address the general guidelines of the consumer’s protection subcommittee. Representative Fleck explained that the purpose of the consumers protection subcommittee was to “find cases of fraud, misleading contracts, dealer extortion and the like, which directly affect the Spanish Speaking communities.” The subcommittee was basically a fact-finding body that would hold hearings on these cases “to obtain background information, resulting in protective legislation.” In this meeting, it was decided that the primary problem at hand was to work through the media in Spanish speaking communities to inform these citizens that the Commission was a tool to initiate legislation. “The specific fact-finding process will deal with fraud, dealer extortion, and syndicated affiliated rakers.” It was agreed that the meetings would be held to “bring examples of these and similar cases of consumer deception, to institute legislation.”

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289 SSPC Records, subcommittee on Health and Welfare. SSPC, March 11, 1972. In the subcommittee on Health and Welfare. Additionally, Vega asked the senator if any of the public members of the commission were Puerto Ricans and if not to answer why. “O’Brien replied that though no Puerto Ricans were members, a Puerto Rican would fill the post of Executive Director.”
290 SSPC Records, subcommittee on Consumers Protection. See the cases of Santiago and Medina, March 11, 1972.
Rican representatives in the consumer protection subcommittee, thus incorporating Puerto Rican businesses and consumer sectors in Illinois.

The study commission aimed to increase state job opportunities for Latinos. The justice and police subcommittee agreed to assure “channels of recourse against harassment and for the discipline and removal of offending officers and making of judges subject to punishment for failing to arrest officers “for violating laws governing body their behavior.” They also wanted more Latino representation in the police force, by “the recruitment and inclusion of policemen of Latino backgrounds,” proposing, for example, the Latin American Police Association.

Similar to the IMC, SSPC’s state reformers emphasized the need to create educational opportunities for immigrant students. On March 11, 1972, members of the subcommittee on education met at Circle Campus in Chicago to discuss how education legislation was implemented in the state. They stated that the priorities of this subcommittee were to develop new proposals for bilingual education inside correctional centers, as well as to develop programs on adult and continuing education in the school system. First, Juan Cruz, a member of the education subcommittee, argued that this subcommittee needed to give “priority to the conditions of prisoners inside state jails,” and also that they needed to expand educational programs there. Other subcommittee members even argued that Latino communities needed “cultural reinforcement via positive concept [sic],” which was, the use of mass media for exalting the value of bilingual and bicultural education in the state. To that end, they appointed Louise

Eggert as the publicity chair and Elias Argot as a researcher, who worked with the Council of Higher Education. The education subcommittee reviewed textbooks published in the state school system. They argued, “No text [should be] used in the school system unless reviewed by bilingual and bicultural” guidelines. In that regard, they appointed a book review committee and aimed to create a scholarship program.

The Study Commission heard the claims of residents and immigrant families in Latino communities. In the District Superintendent A-17, Carmen Chico, a resident present at the meeting, pointed out the concern of the Spanish Speaking People in area A-17 regarding the appointment of Dr. Marie V. O’Brien as District Superintendent for the entire Area A. Chico argued that, “Dr. O’Brien [had] been insensitive to the problems and the needs of the Spanish Speaking” communities there. Mrs. Chico asked support from the Spanish Speaking Study Commission. She requested that a “meeting be set up with Dr. Redmond, Superintendent of Schools” and find out, “what can be done to stop her?” Following this meeting, they organized a committee to meet with Dr. Richmond, which included all the persons who attended education subcommittee’s meetings, Mrs. Chico, Alice Terrazas, Elias Argot, Kay Navarro, Al Bonilla, Clara Flores, Martin Blanco, and Mrs. Beloz.

The SSPC held these special subcommittee meetings with the help of local groups. The education subcommittee of the Study Commission also met on March 25, 1972. They addressed the fact that Senator O’Brien, the chair of the SSPC, had lost the primary election. Ms. Lujan

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said that “O Brien [was] officially the chair of the Commission until January of 1973 [that] she would make an appointment with Senator Partee regarding O’ Brien’s resignation.” She assured the committee that “we cannot get stuck with O’Brien’s decision on this matter.”298 However, they moved on with the meeting, in which they agreed to make school district “site visits, conduct fact finding tours and hold public hearings” with the purpose of analyzing school literature. Dr. Maya suggested, “letters should be sent to school principals prior to any site visit.” 299 Members suggested to conduct site visits in Bowen High School, Lakeview High School and Burns, Sheridan, Cooper and Agassiz schools.300

The SSPC hearings intertwined local and state level reform objectives. On April 8, 1972, the subcommittees on political representation met to discuss the “work of the previous meeting of the subcommittee held on March 11, 1972.” The following members were present at the meeting: Jesse J. Perez as vice chair; Claudio Flores, Juan Gomez, Graciano Lopez, Joseph Lopez, Carlos Martinez, Jesus Arroyo, Salomon Peña, Catherine S. Ramirez, M.C. Solis, and Jose Vasquez.301 In this meeting they prepared six resolutions regarding Latino political participation. The proposals ranged from extending bilingual registrars to political parties and candidates commitments through the state. These proposals stated:

First, [Since Latin Americans, even though not citizens, are required to pay taxes and served their country in war and did some much with distinctions are not allowed to participate in decisions that affect them because of language, citizenship, or residency requirements, we move that all Latin Americans be allowed to register and vote on local, state, federal issues and candidates, whether citizen or not, if they have evidenced by actions, deeds, or intent that they wish to participate.302]
Second, that bilingual and bicultural registrars be appointed in all communities evidencing a Latin Population."

Third, that all legislative committee and all levels of government, local, state, judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government have representation of the Latin-American community appointed by their respective bodies or the Governor of the state of Illinois.

Fourth, that “the patronage workers not be allowed, forced, or sent to do any political propaganda into the Spanish speaking people homes.

Fifth, that “we invite and request representatives of all political parties, committees, etc, or those actively involved in the election, review, endorsement, or interest of the election of public officials to appear before our subcommittee to communicate their views concerning lack of political representation in levels of government sphere of the Latin American community.

Six, “we strongly suggest that the policy of certain political groups of allowing or requiring local, state or federal governmental employees and those employed by local, state, or federally funded programs from threatening Latin American voters that unless they vote a particular way on any issue, benefits they are receiving from any agency or funded program will be discontinued."

This focus on political participation, which they shared with other organizations like the Illinois Migrant Council, allowed the Study Commission to advocate for the political rights of Latinos and for the labor rights of agricultural workers. However, the study commission’s political subcommittees presented such broad objectives and proposals that focused not only on political and labor rights, but also on bilingual education reform as well as the Latino inclusion in the different levels of government. Members of the Study Commission continued meeting in this subcommittee during the 1970s, even when they encountered several negative responses.

State reformers also faced some opposition from residents’ groups. An example of resistance to the Study Commission was a statement made at the end of a meeting by a participant. He was concerned with the alleged illegal status of the members of the political participation subcommittee. Eriberto Campos spoke to the committee “with some fervor the alleged fact that some unnamed members or members of the subcommittee presented in the room did not possess United States citizenship… Mr. Campos felt very strongly that this group was not proper; particularly for a group which was examining the political participation of Latin

303 SSPC Records, subcommittee on Political Participation, April 8, 1972.
Americans.” There were several reactions to Mr. Campos’ statement and the Study Group Commission agreed to consider it at a later meeting.

The SSPC reorganized after the 1972 election cycle. The members of the SSPC released a “Call to Return to Action”, in which they stated the legislative changes affecting the study commission as result of the election cycle. The SSPC underwent an internal reorganization; some legislators members were withdrawn, so new ones had to be appointed. “With regret, we saw Republican Charles J. Fleck leaving and we welcome new legislative members.” In the public membership of the Commission, there were also several changes. Commissioners Margaret Lujan, Raul Torres and Cruz T. Sierra finished their appointments. The new appointees were Tony Figueroa from Waukegan and Jose Terronez from Silvis, named vice chair and secretary respectively. Consequently, with a new staff, the commission scheduled some hearings for that same year. They continued to familiarize with the Commission’s scope of work and actively pursued seeking solutions to the most pressing problems, which illustrates how the Commission had returned, again to action. They recommitted to continue working for the betterment of the Spanish speaking community at the state level.

The SSPC conducted four hearings in which they aimed to bring visibility to issues affecting the Latino population in the greater Chicago area. They heard testimonies from many witnesses who provided statements on the varied problems of Latino immigrants in Illinois, such as unfair employment practices, education and representation on local government. This

committee hearing gained the support of the Illinois Migrant Council and other immigration activists who were successful in joining efforts in contesting local governmental practices.

Moreover, due to the growth of the Latino population in Illinois, the SSPC developed hearings outside of city limits to support Latino reform objectives. The Study Commission held its first hearing in Mundelein, Illinois, on February 23, 1972. Several witnesses testified about the problems that the Spanish-speaking people were confronting in the Lake County area. The witnesses included Ray Rodriquez, head of a Bilingual Program in Waukegan, Vince Lombardo, Chair of the language department in Barrington High School, and Bonnie Bade former head of the Bilingual Program at Mundelein High School. The main topics presented pertained to issues of Latino education, health, employment, and cultural problems.

The problems of Latino employment and discrimination were the overriding issues discussed at these single-theme hearings. For example, the Study Commission’s second hearing was held on March 23, 1972 in Joliet, Illinois. Some of the witnesses included Roberto Torres, a former migrant worker currently working as an employment counselor for the Spanish center, and father Victor Lopez director of the Latino Center in Joliet. They addressed the lack of Latinos in Joliet, and felt they had to make changes in establishing “fair employment opportunities for all minorities in all areas of public and private employment.”

The issue of employment fairness and opportunity was the central concern of these activists.

State reformers listened to individual grievances and also to the growing labor demands of Latinos. The Spanish-Speaking Peoples Study Commission held its third hearing of the year in

North Aurora, Illinois. The hearing took place in the St. Charles Room at the Holiday Inn. Tony Figueroa, vice chair of the Study Commission, presided over this hearing. For him, “the main thrust in this hearing was to hear about the problems faced by Spanish Speaking residents of the Aurora area in regard to discrimination, in so far as employment is concerned in government agencies; hiring practices in the city police and fire departments, and the amendments to enact legislation,” such as The Workers Compensations Act.\(^{307}\)

Immigrant reformers helped the SSPC address local residents’ concerns. Some of the testimonies in this hearing included Gil Barrio, from the Latin Migrant Council in Aurora, “whose main concern was to point out the need that exists in Aurora for more Day Care Centers.” He contended that the families in Aurora have no place to take their children. He wanted to increase the numbers Day Care Centers in that area.\(^{308}\) In addition, William Torres addressed the issue of discrimination in employment of Latino workers at government agencies and private industries.

Latino residents and numerous witnesses participated in the commission’s hearings. For instance, Juan M. Ruberte, a participant in the meeting, gave an overall view regarding legislation in areas of the Automobile Financial Responsibility, the Workers Compensation Act. He explained, “How the Spanish speaking were being seriously affected in this particular area.” Juan Rosa, an aurora resident, complained about the lack of Latino teachers in local educational agencies. Moreover,” he stressed that “this [was] one of the main factors which prevented children from truly being motivated to learn, since the child cannot culturally relate to [his/her]


own teacher.” 309 Brad White, Director of Youth Opportunities for the city of Aurora, “testified and answered some of the questions regarding the problems posed by the cultural differences of the Spanish speaking children in the educational system.” Mr. White’s main point was to advocate for the right to a bilingual and bicultural education. 310

Immigration activists asked the SSPC to elaborate with concrete solutions for Latino underemployment. Additional witnesses in these special meeting of the Latino employment subcommittee included Richard Plata, a visitor who addressed the hearing “to find more effective ways to reach out to Spanish speaking residents to become registered voters.” Also, Jessie Garcia emphasized “the need for studying and modifying some of the employment practices in the city of Aurora, so that the Spanish speaking residents have access to equal opportunities.” As it stands now, he mentioned, the local government had very few Spanish speaking persons working for it. He concluded, “This needed to be remedied as soon as possible.” 311 Mary Decker, Commissioner for the city of Aurora presented new ideas. She spoke out discriminatory employment practices faced by Latinos in this area. She also noted, in relation to employment there had not been a serious effort on the part of their agency to hire Latinos. Decker questioned the sincerity of the City officials regarding the recruitment and hiring of bilingual personnel and other issues like unjust arrests, and stated, “Many police officers cannot communicate with

Latino and Spanish speaking residents.” Decker grievances showed that these activists became important vocalists for the SSPC and Latino immigration rights.

The SSPC hearings expanded into central Illinois. The Spanish Speaking Peoples Study Commission held its 4th hearing on, August 30, 1972 in East Moline, Illinois (Quad cities). The public hearing took place in the autoworkers union hall. The Commissioners toured two migrant farms in Rock Island County and the Migrant Child Development Center. Juan Castillon and Ella Ochoa conducted the tour. Castillon was director of the Illinois Migrant Council of the Rock Island Region, and Ochoa an outreach worker from the council. Representing the Commission were Senator Karl Berning and Senator James F. Bell; representatives Ben Polk, LeRoy W. Lemke; Commissioners Tony Figueroa and Joseph A. Terronez, Awilda Ocasio, the executive director of the Commission, who was also present.

These reformers worked to find local solutions beyond city reforms. The main purpose of this hearing was to discuss the many problems faced by the migrant workers while in Illinois. Education, health, and housing related problems were the main topics presented by the witnesses in this hearing. On the education issue, for instance, the main witness was: Lupe Reyes, Director of Adult Education Programs for Blackhawk College, a community college and a resource center for Latino immigrant children. Reyes addressed the problems in areas of pre-vocational training programs, on the job training, and adult basic education. Rachel Sierra, Director of the Migrant Child Development Center, from Edgingtown, Illinois, in turn testified about the needs for more

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educational, bilingual programs for the children. Finally, Anthony R. Alle, from Illinois Central College in East Peoria, also testified on educational needs of the migrant families.\footnote{SSPC Records, \textit{East Moline}, Illinois, August 30, 1972.}

SSPC members also reported on in-job safety concerns for agricultural workers. Regarding some of the health issues, the witness Rev. Vitolds Valainis “spoke about the hazards that the migrant workers go through because of the fields not being properly sprayed with pesticides.” This situation, he said, made the migrant worker more vulnerable to diseases.\footnote{SSPC Records, \textit{East Moline}, Illinois, August 30, 1972.} Furthermore, health inspections of migrant housing conditions were not being conducted according to enacted legislation. On housing and other related problems, the witnesses were sister Molly Munoz, a nurse from the Migrant Committee of Muscatine, Iowa and Juan Mejia and Juan Castillon, both from the Illinois Migrant Council, who presented grievances about the seriousness of the problems affecting Latino immigrants. They agreed that of special importance was the role of “the crew-leader” to solve the problems in recruiting migrant workers from other states.\footnote{SSPC Records, \textit{East Moline}, Illinois, August 30, 1972.}

Growers from the area of Reynolds and Illinois City, Illinois, also testified and presented their own points of view. Steve Mueller suggested legislation to make it mandatory for children of migrant families to go to school. Growers, Keith Girls, Tom Marple, and Robert Bull, commented that, “migrant families [were] unable to keep their housing and facilities clean and [expressed] the fact of the large amounts of money the migrants make during seasonal work here

\footnote{SSPC Records, \textit{East Moline}, Illinois, August 30, 1972.}
in Illinois.” In the hearing, a member of Governor Walker’s Special Migrant Survey Team, H.L. McMillan, was also present. He commented, “The team [was] surveying forty-five migrant camps in the State to investigate safety related problems.” As special guests, there were four visitors from the Iowa Governors’ Spanish Speaking Taskforce: Ilia Placencia, Juan Cadena, Ernesto Rodriguez and Fidel Alvarez. With the purpose of obtaining additional information as well as more community involvement, the Study Commission formed several task forces in order to take action and to gather data about the most urgent problems. In theory, these task forces would make specific recommendations to the members of the Commission, so that these recommendations may become legislative bills.

Until the 1970s, some of the Study Commission hearings included meetings with elected officials. On April 28, 1977, the members of the Study Commission met with the Governor James R. Thompson. A Committee headed by Representative A. Morovitz met Governor in Springfield to discuss issues affecting Latinos in the state. Earlier that year, Chair Morovitz had appointed an Ad-Hoc Committee for this particular purpose as mandated by the Health, Education, and Welfare Taskforce. Two public members of the Commission, Tony Figueroa and Alfredo R. Ramirez were present. Representing the Ad-Hoc Committee were Kay Navarro, Carmen Velázquez, and Elias Argot Castillo. Awidla Berrios, the Commission’s Executive

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320 SSPC Records, Task Forces. Illinois State Archives.
Director, accompanied the delegation. The Commission Chair, Representative Morovitz, arranged the meeting.\textsuperscript{321} The Minutes from the meeting stated:

\begin{quote}
[The meeting took place in a friendly, informal atmosphere. Governor Thompson was receptive to the delegation’s concerns. He listened carefully and suggested concrete steps to begin solving some of the problems presented to him. Representative Morovitz briefed the Governor about the Commission’s role and functions. Carmen Velázquez, who presented a general overview of educational problems faced by the Spanish speaking, followed him. Velazquez emphasized the need for quality in the delivery of services to bilingual children. Regarding employment, Elias Argot verbalized the problems and the need for an effective affirmative action program in the state’s offices and agencies. Tony Figueroa [presented] the housing concerns and [spoke] on the role of the Illinois Housing Development Authority in relation to the Latino community. In behalf of the Migrant Workers, Alfredo R. Ramirez spoke, strongly advocating more action to solve the many serious problems affecting the migrant segment of our Spanish-speaking population.]\textsuperscript{322}

Members of the SSPC reported on their work alliances and state level collaboration. Awilda Berrios outlined a series of recommendations to improve the health services in the Latino communities throughout the state. Kay Navarro “addressed herself to the need for fair Latino representation in all the state’s Commissions, Committees, and Boards, either in honorary or paid capacities.” Representative Morovitz closed the presentation by seeking the Governor’s support on behalf of the work of funding of the Spanish Speaking Commission Study Commission.\textsuperscript{323}

Minutes and reports show that the Governor reacted very positively to all the SSPC recommendations made. He stated that, “he prefer[ed] actions rather than promises.”\textsuperscript{324} A summary report was handed to the Governor, with recommendations for areas such as education, employment, housing, health, and lastly more importantly on migrant workers. The report stated that the SSPC was cognizant of the needs of seasonal laborers in Illinois agriculture, urged

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{321} SSPC Records, \textit{Meeting with the Governor}, April 28. 1977.
\item \textsuperscript{322} SSPC Records, \textit{Meeting with the Governor}, April 28. 1977.
\item \textsuperscript{323} SSPC Records, \textit{Meeting with the Governor}, April 28. 1977.
\item \textsuperscript{324} SSPC Records, \textit{Meeting with the Governor}, April 28. 1977.
\end{itemize}
legislation to aid migrant workers in housing, health care, child care and education, and Coordination of all public and private efforts on behalf of migrant workers to avoid duplication of services. The enforcement of existing Migrant Workers Legislation was a priority. The SSPC concluded that “this meeting was a fruitful one,” opening the lines of communication between the Governor and the Commission.325

The SSPC, as a Study Commission, gained local supporters in their efforts to fight for immigrant rights. As I suggest, they continued working at the state level, cooperating and advocating for bilingual education and immigration legislation.326 During the 1970s, they advanced new reform objectives. The collaboration with other immigrant organizations and agencies allowed the work of the Study Commission to be divided into several subcommittees. The members of this commission presented reports on the current conditions of Latino immigrant workers and made relevant recommendations to solve the problems of agricultural workers. The Study Commission conducted full hearings with members of immigration organizations from all over the state as well as with Latino reformers, residents, and activists. As in the early stages of this Study Commission, the members took an active part in making informed, transformative recommendations and thus succeeded in developing useful resources for proposing legislation beneficial for Latino immigrants in the state.

325 SSPC Records, Meeting with the Governor, April 28, 1977; See also Letter of Hon Clyde L Choate, Chairman-Illinois Commission on Children – June 8, 1962.

326 See Chicago Tribune’s article for debates on Bilingual and Bicultural Education, Education a still top priority for Spanish speaking of the city, Chicago Tribune, October 16, 1975.
Illinois Committee for Migrant Children (ICMC) during the 1970s

During the 1970s, the Illinois state government developed new programs and agencies that advocated for the rights of immigrants’ children and families. At first, under the Illinois Commission on Children, the Illinois Committee for Migrant Children (ICMC) expanded an independent working group to aid the families of immigrant workers. On February 23, 1973, the ICMC was created to mobilize and coordinate available economic resources —public and private, agency and individual —to support and promote the development, establishment and expansion of quality child development services for the children of migrant farm workers in the States of Illinois.  

This commission also tried to locate immediate services for recently immigrant workers and families. Latino families in Illinois used the ICMC to access social services and rights. As this section shows, the ICMC developed a single-focused and state-level action, which contrasted with the SSPC’s broad objectives. The ICMC centered on advocating for separate immigration services and programs that could help to address the most immediate needs of immigrant workers and families of Illinois.

According to the organization’s by-laws, the membership consisted of representing Latino employees and migrant families of diverse geographical areas, as well as concerned residents from areas with high migrant populations and representative agencies that worked with migrants. The basis of representation consisted of “one member of each representing board, staff, and migrant family” of geographical areas served by the migrant child development centers.

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The committee also included concerned citizens from geographical areas not served by the MCDC and one member from each agency, local, regional, state, or national. Each board elected representatives from each of the above categories. The term of office of each “was left at the discretion of each MCDC.”

The Illinois Commission for Migrant Children agreed to organize regular meetings and to appoint immigration advocates. They stated that, “at least two regular meetings shall be held at such time and place during the year of 1973, to transact such business as may properly come before the committee including evaluating migrant child care programs, hearing reports, planning for the next program year, amending by-laws, electing new officers and other pertinent matters. The October meeting included the election of officers.”

The membership of the Committee was voluntary and only the regular member or an alternate from the same category may vote. The committee may invite representatives of private and public agencies and groups or other individuals “to serve on a limited basis in an advisory and/or consultant capacity “[but] without a vote.” In the nominating process each year, the chair appointed a Nomination Committee, which consisted of members from each one of the Day Care Community Centers. The nomination “committee [solicited] suggestions for nominees for each office and submit a slate to the Committee members at least one month prior to the October meetings.” In these reports, the ICMC included the changes in membership and structure.

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328 ICMC Records, MCDC, Members of governing board of migrant child development centers.
329 ICMC Records, MCDC, Members of governing board of migrant child development centers.
330 ICMC Records, Article IX Meetings, Illinois State Archives.
331 ICMC Records, MCDC, Members of governing board of migrant child development centers.
332 ICMC Records, Article V Nominations and Elections, Illinois State Archives.
The ICMC combined strategies that immigration organizations like the IMC had implemented at the local level. The members of the ICMC during February 1973 were Rosario Lopez, Mike Rempfer, Jim Foley, Carmen Vera, Barbara Frankel, Ruth Holmes, Joan Cunnea, Rita Disinger, and Carlton Williams. These state and local reformers had previously worked in social agencies throughout the Chicago area. On Saturday October 5, 1974 at ten in the morning, the ICMC met at the Christ Episcopal Church on 602 Old Orchard Road in Harvard, Illinois. In this meeting the ICMC elected the officers for the commission year, 1974. Rosario Lopez and Mike Rempfer were selected as chair and vice chair respectively. The other positions selected in this meeting were Jim Foley, secretary; Carmen Vera, Assistant Secretary; and Barbara Frankel, Treasurer.

The ICMC aimed to include migration reform objectives into their state programs. By October 1974, the ICMC had reviewed the recruitment process for children, in consultation with a representative of the director of Department of Children and Family Services, Mary Lee Leahy. The budget for 1975 included new funding directions, and the status of Group Eligibility in Title IV. Rachel Sierra from the ICMC worked on expanding day care homes for infants during the summer of 1974, and Jim Foley organized the program Right to Access to Migrant Homes. Specifically, on October 7, 1974, Cathy Leahy wrote to Carlton William, Assistant Administrator from the Office of Child Development to express her views on the Illinois Migrant Program. She wrote, “As per your instructions for DCFC representation, I attended this meeting concerning the

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334 ICMC Records, October 5, 1974, Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) covered the administration of the U.S federal student financial aid programs.
Illinois Migrant Program.” The members expressed concerns regarding the delays in reimbursements” (late payment of salaries and bills) and problems in gaining startup funds. The participants were also interested in additional funding for lengthening seasonal programs.336

Immigration activists believed that some compromise with elected officials was possible. Regarding the migrant program, Leahy wrote to Williams saying that she “informed members that you were both aware and concerned relative to reimbursement delays and exploring grant-in-aid for startup costs.” She indicated, the “Governor was interested and supportive of the Migrant Program.” Ira Belsky from the Governor’s Office is requesting that DCFS recommend legislative enactment supportive of the Migrant Program.”337 Similarly, the “Committee members indicated that they felt that you are sensitive to their problems and expressed appreciation for sending a representative to the meeting… The executive Committee would further like to communicate with you in a meeting in Chicago at your convenience.”338

In October, the ICMC received the Governor’s support in the form of an award from the Illinois Migrant Council.

Collaboration included looking into the grievances of agricultural and temporary workers and their families. At a meeting on October 29, 1974, members of the Migrant Program and the ICMC discussed the programs established in 1970 to provide services for seasonal and year round day care services for agricultural workers. By 1974, they had served at least 560 children and families, as well as created over fifteen centers. “For fiscal year 1973-1974 the funding total

335 ICMC Records, October 7, 1974, Illinois State Archives.
337 ICMC Records, October 7, 1974, Illinois State Archives.
was of 461,493.00 (361.493 State and 100,000 federal).” They evaluated that by 1974, Illinois was the only state receiving federal funding for migrant head start. In other states non-public or private groups provided funding.339 Throughout 1974, the ICMC used state and local funding to provide services to agricultural workers’ families.

The ICMC addressed additional issues, such as health problems on Illinois’ migrant farms. They stated, “farm owners have refused admittance to DCFS and day care center staff to communicate with migrant families – in some cases there is a concerned about health and welfare of these families.” As a result, they expressed that “were both aware and concerned about the situation.”340 Thus, they sent a letter to Dr. Joyce Lashoff regarding the problems at migrant farms, and DCFS provided the appropriate assistance in supporting efforts.

At a meeting of the ICMC with Mary Lee Leahy, the members of the ICMC discussed several recurring issues such as state funding, late contracts and late payments. On November 12, 1974, they commented on the need to expand new costs for programs. Rosario Lopez referred to the census of Migrant children done by Ben Obregon.341 But, they also raised questions about its accuracy. The group emphasized that “The current Migrant Day Care Programs do not reach all the known migrant children in the state and that a new center was being projected for the Kankakee area.” During the 1974 fiscal year, approximately 600 preschool migrant children were served in the early development programs. The total costs of such programs were projected at $ 461,493.00. With expanded services, the ICMC needed “to meet the actual number of

341 ICMC Records, November 12, 1974, Mary Lee Leahy, Illinois State Archives.
children, and more funding must be committed.”342 The ICMC worked to find more opportunities for migrant families, expanding their services into more counties in the state.

The ICMC worked on the lack of funding for Seasonal Migrant Programs at the local level. Roberta Rempfer “pointed out this need to remain on straight line budget, because of the variable attendance of Migrant children and the high transportation costs…” She referred to her inability to reach all the migrant children in the DeKalb area that past summer due to the Seasonal Migrant Program’s reduction of budget. Rempfer also pointed out the special needs of some communities, which “do not donate [locally] to the migrant programs.”343 She specified the Rochelle area where the Seasonal Migrant Programs did not meet the needs of the families because of lack of funds. In DeKalb County “her program can live with per diem rate because she has been able to acquire community [funds]. DeKalb is somewhat exceptional in this area.”

344 At this meeting, Rempfer referred to the Senate Bill, the Mondale Child Care Act, and hoped that the Department would support it. “She mentioned that last year all of the state funded day care centers had acted to continue the freeze on Title IV-A monies and will support the Mondale Bill.”345 Proposing changes to state legislation was a priority for the ICMC members.

Nonetheless, Latino immigration advocacy was also on the agenda of the ICMC state reformers. For instance, Rosario Lopez raised questions about the Department’s attitudes towards Latinos in Illinois. She cited her own family’s negative experiences with the Department of Children and Families and the instance of three Mexican American children being left with a

342 ICMC Records, November 12, 1974, Rosario Lopez, Illinois State Archives.
343 ICMC Records, November 12, 1974, Roberta Rempfer.
344 ICMC Records, November 12, 1974, Roberta Rempfer, See also, DeKalb IL. Migrant Council Records.
345 ICMC Records, November 12, 1974, Roberta Rempfer.
non-Latino environment, stating: “She is very concerned that these children are now in a non-Latin foster home. She is convinced that department makes little or no effort to recruit Latino homes for Latin Children.”

Leahy acknowledged the ICMC’s genuine concern for the “bilingual and bicultural needs of the migrant child.” She suggested that all of the Committee members meet with the Department’s area officers to voice their grievances about this population, and also requested that qualified Latinos apply for positions in the Department. “She referred to a recent memo sent by her to all staff requiring that the needs of Latino clients be given an opportunity.”

These concerns occupied the workers of the ICMC, who collaborated with other agencies to bring meaningful changes in state policy regarding migrant children.

Similar to the collaboration between the Illinois Migration Council and the SSPC in 1963, the ICMC worked closely with the Illinois Migrant Program, an organization of immigration reformers focused on providing year round Day Care services for agricultural workers and families. The ICMC had created separate efforts in which they addressed immigration inequality—in housing, employment, and health. However, as I argue regarding immigrant advocacy, the ICMC’s specific focus on Children and Families contrasted greatly with the general and broad agenda of both the SSPC and the Illinois Migrant Council, as it targeted a particular segment of the Latino population in Illinois.

**Illinois Migrant Council during the 1970s**

During the 1970s, the Illinois Migrant Council was able to decentralize their offices, and thus expand their activism across the state. Besides working in the Chicago area, they expanded

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347 ICMC Records, Mary Lee Leahy, Illinois State Archives.
their work on issues of immigration employment to areas including DeKalb County, Elk Grove Village, South Holland, Chicago Heights and Hoopeston, Illinois. Immigration activists from this organization, who fought for immigrant workers’ rights and jobs, joined the SSPC in passing legislation that was favorable for Latino immigrants of Illinois.

The IMC sponsored programs for migrant and seasonal farm workers. In the annual reports, the years between 1969 and 1979 were characterized as intense working years for decentralization, legislatively, and providing legal services for migrant families. During the 1970s the IMC developed multiservice centers to aid people settling out the migrant stream. For the IMC members legislatively, 1971 was considered “the turning point for migrant and season farm workers in Illinois.” The fact was that Illinois legislators responded to alleviate the gross injustices perpetrated on migrant workers by establishing a “legislative commission composed of public and private members to investigate the plight of the Illinois migratory workers.”

The action of local activists facilitated the work the IMC did with immigrant workers. The IMC actively cooperated with the Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission “in determining key geographic farm areas to hold hearings, by selecting witnesses, and by providing the Commission with pertinent legal data and on site photographs of migrant conditions.” As a result of this cooperation during the 1970s, the IMC and the Study Commission submitted at least 100 pieces of legislation directly affecting migrant farm workers, and generally the Latino population.

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348 IMC Records, *1971 Annual Reports*. The IMC had an annual budget of $1.5 million, mostly for the U.S. Department of Labor and of Health, Education, and Welfare. “The money was used to work with the estimated 28,000 migrant workers who enter the state each year, including 4,000 in Cook, Will, Kankakee, Kane, and McHenry Counties. The council’s 57 full time employees in field offices around the state provide migrant workers with medical care, vocational training, and referral service for food stamps and other services.”

349 IMC *1971 Annual Reports*. See also Illinois Migrant Council in DeKalb county legal cases.
in the state. \textsuperscript{350} At least 33 bills were signed into law, and throughout the years they continued working with the SSPC “to muster support for pending legislation and in other areas deem necessary.” \textsuperscript{351} This collaboration continued throughout the 1970s.

In 1970, the IMC expanded local offices throughout the state of Illinois. While working on these local chapters, they collaborated and established alliances with emerging organizations. The organization, Neighbors At Work (NAW) was formed in December of 1969, following the evictions of six migrant families from Elk Grove Village. “Immediately prior to the evictions, three children in the Juan Arenas family had died in a fire which destroyed their run-down farm in an unincorporated area of Elk Grove Township.” \textsuperscript{352} Consequently, “Elk Grove Village NAW renewed their support for the passage of a revised Illinois migrant camp law, which [brought] Illinois into conformance with existing federal law.” \textsuperscript{353} NAW argued that this new legislation would eliminate a provision of the Illinois legislation that limited the purview to migrant camps. Centralizing the work allowed the ICM to focus on these individual cases.

IMC and local activists joined efforts to understand immigration reform more broadly. The NAW organized additional meetings with the purpose of considering the migrant housing problem in the area. \textsuperscript{354} Louis Archibald, the group’s housing chair, said 2,000 migrant families lived in the Chicago’s northwest suburbs during the April to October season. Roberto Muñoz, of the IMC, told the meeting that there were 45,000 migrant workers in the state, and that most of

\textsuperscript{350} IMC 1971 Annual Reports, legislation, 3.
\textsuperscript{351} IMC 1971 Annual Reports, legislation, 3.
\textsuperscript{352} Elk Grove Group Asks Migrant Law Revision, Chicago Tribune, May 21,1970.
\textsuperscript{353} Elk Grove Group Asks Migrant Law Revision, Chicago Tribune, May 21,1970.
\textsuperscript{354} Elk Grove Group Asks Migrant Law Revision, Chicago Tribune, May 21,1970.
these workers spend the winter in Texas. Munoz and the IMC “promised a march from Elk
Grove Village to Arlington Heights to demonstrate to the public the number of migrants living in
this area.” These events showed that the IMC had a growing interest in collective immigration
activism in Illinois.

The following year, labor unions organized some larger marches and mobilization
throughout the Midwestern states. “Illinois and three other Midwest states would be key targets
for a Farm Workers Union organizing drive in which consumer boycotts will be a union
tactic….” The AFL-CIO aimed to extend into other areas of the country. The ICM provided
data to the Meeting of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, which promoted a
consumer’ boycott of grapes as one its chief strike weapons at the Drake Hotel. While leaders of
the Chicano Movement like Cesar Chavez and Eliseo Medina helped expand an agenda in favor
of farm workers rights at a national level, in Illinois, reformer groups like the ICM helped to
provide services to migrant workers. For the IMC, Illinois was “one of the largest employers of
migrant labor, estimating the number of migrant workers in the state at approximately
20,000…The [IMC] asserted recently there [were] 45,000 migrant workers in the state during the
farming season.” In addition by 1970, the IMC officials predicted a “worsening situation for
the 4,000 Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers [who] were expected to arrive in south Cook
County by late summer.” Council officials estimated the normal income for a family working the
tomato fields near Chicago Heights and South Holland at $900 to $1,500 for the summer.

356  *Farm Union Sets Sights on Four Midwest States*, Chicago Tribune, August 6, 1970.
357  *Farm Union Sets Sights on Four Midwest States*, Chicago Tribune, August 6, 1970.
Housing, health and pay for migrants in Illinois were as bad as anywhere else in the country, according to the findings of state legislative commission. Thus, the IMC members worked on both, direct participation and legislative action.

Immigration activists in Illinois saw that they had to prioritize temporary employment and housing opportunities. Robert Reicher, the IMC treasurer, stated in 1971 that the “drought this year in Texas and Florida resulted in poor harvests and fewer field jobs there, forcing more than the usual number of workers to come north.” He added, “mechanization of the Michigan cherry harvest would bring more of the northbound migrants to Cook County than in past years.” Porfirio Torres, director of the council’s Chicago Heights office, said “adding to the expected strain on available housing and jobs in Cook County would increase here due to mechanization in the tomatoes fields.” Moreover, the council reported “farms will continue to hire migrant labor for rainy weather when tomato-picking machines cannot be used in the fields.”

Throughout the 1970s, the IMC continued placing migrant families in permanent housing and jobs. Torres stressed “we have to get people out of the migrant stream—because there just were not enough jobs for them in the fields.” IMC said that migrant workers “who try to make permanent homes [were] often in greatest need of emergency assistance because they have been unable to save enough money for living expenses plus the cost of furniture and deposits for rent

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358 Farm Union Sets Sights on Four Midwest States, Chicago Tribune, August 6, 1970.  
and utilities.”

Torres explained that providing individual assistance to agricultural workers in Illinois allowed the IMC to make informed recommendations for future legislation.

In a series of investigative reports on migration in the state of Illinois, Joseph Sjostrom in his 1974 Chicago Tribune article, *Things Are Getting Better for Migrant Workers*, uncovered important testimonies of migrant workers and of the agencies and immigration activists that had helped them during the 1960s and 1970s. In his report, Sjostrom described that, “spokespersons for some governmental and private agencies [were] concerned with migrant farm workers” and cautiously said that in 1974, “for the first time in memory, housing, sanitation, and health conditions for migrants may actually be improving slightly, they emphasized slightly.” For example Roberto Muñoz from the IMC stated, “There have been some improvements in the large migrant camps around Hoopeston and Vermilion area, too.”

In that regard, Sjostrom’s article documented the individual experiences of long-term migratory patterns in the Midwest:

> [For the last 10 years Vicente Tamez, 38, and his brother Jose, 42, have brought their families north from Texas in June or July to spend a backbreaking summer working in the orchards and on the farms of the Midwest.”...But this year, they said things [were] just a little bit better. Both worked for a farmer in East Chicago Heights and lived in a house on his property. Vicente said, “they’re not in bad shape and they have indoor plumbing, which is was a lot better than they worked last year near Crown Point.”... “The farmers’ housing was in such bad shape that when he was ordered to fix things up, he just tore it all down instead.]

Joseph Sjostrom also noted how the IMC council employees had referred cases of substandard housing to the Illinois Department of Public Health or to the state Department of Labor, which enforced the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Betsy Blosser, Director of the IMC field office in Chicago Heights, wrote about the poor housing conditions, “When we

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[reported] substandard conditions, the Department of Public Health was quick to respond with inspections, but then nothing [happened].” Besides poor housing, migrant workers have also suffered from being among the lowest paid workers. In addition, “one result of the low pay scales was widespread inability to pay for adequate medical care.” Blosser said,

[We gave them medical examinations at the Migrant Council clinic in Chicago Heights. The doctors found a lot of children suffering from anemia and malnutrition, and all kinds of hearing, cardiac, and diabetic conditions. Many of the children and families could not afford medication and the follow up that such conditions required. But also the IMC paid for that “at least for the half year that the migrants were in Illinois.”]

In 1975, Sjostrom published another article, which included additional testimonies from agricultural workers in Illinois. One example was Salomon Sanchez, a migrant liaison officer with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, who was quite pleased, since he stated that “it was amazing how different things [were] from five years ago. [He explained that], migrants just don’t take orders without question as they used to….” According to Sanchez, migrants who came to the Midwest in 1975 found cleaner housing in the migrant camps than they did five years prior, even though the living space was about the same. He said migrants were then protected by an increasing number of federal and state laws, including Workmen’s Compensation, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and requirements for advance disclosure of wages by crew recruiters. Sanchez argued that “enforcement of safety camp inspection was not consistent.”

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365 Snowstorm, “*Migrant Find Jobs are Scarce; Amazing Changes: Migrant Workers Gain by Degrees*, Chicago Tribune, August 21, 1975.

366 Sjostrom, “*Migrant Find Jobs are Scarce; Amazing Changes: Migrant Workers Gain by Degrees*, Chicago Tribune, August 21, 1975; “According to Illinois and Indiana officials, jobs for migrants in 1975 were scarce, “especially this year, they said layoffs in other industries in Texas and Florida, plus a short cherry harvest in Michigan and floods in Minnesota [combined] to create unusual stiff competition for jobs in the field.” Roy Villarreal, director of the Aurora office of
Also, Bob Thomas, director of the IMC office in Hoopeston, Illinois, noted “the farmers and canneries can afford to pay more, and they should start paying more now, before the migrants get organized.” The Hoopeston office served a two-county area 110 miles south of Chicago that was home for 2,000 migrants that summer of 1975. Still she wrote, “Farmers and business denied that their migrant workers were underpaid.” By 1975, the IMC had successfully expanded their offices in Central Illinois, which allowed them to work directly on the main problems of the Illinois farm workers.

Muñoz, Executive Director of IMC, explained that they had helped to expand vocational and educational programs for farm workers. “In cooperation with local colleges in several areas throughout the state, farm workers can also take part in vocational educational programs.” Farm workers or migrants seeking information on these programs contacted and visited the council administrative office in Chicago, or either of the two suburban Cook County offices in Chicago Heights and Palatine. The IMC throughout the 1970s and in 1977 fought for the betterment of migrant workers of Illinois. In 1977, this agency received funding from the U. S Department of Labor, which “allocated $1.1 million …to provide job training and supportive services for migrant and seasonal farm workers.” The funds, which were made available for the 1977 program under Title III of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), “provided for a variety of services to help migrant and seasonal farm workers overcome chronic

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367 Sjostrom Migrant Find Jobs are Scarce; Amazing Changes: Migrant Workers Gain by Degrees, Chicago Tribune, August 21, 1975.
368 Sjostrom Migrant Find Jobs are Scarce; Amazing Changes: Migrant Workers Gain by Degrees, Chicago Tribune, August 21, 1975.
unemployment and underemployment, and improve their well-being.” Robert Muñoz said, “that through its seven regional offices and four centers around the state the council provided on-the-job training programs and outreach services for such farm workers.” He added that the workers were involved in two of the job-training programs, in the Paxton, IL (Ford County) area.  

With regard to housing policies, the IMC worked statewide throughout the 1960s and 1970s to provide state approved support for migrant families. Still, “while a variety of state agencies [had] programs aimed at helping migrant laborers with finances, education, and medical attention, no specific figures existed for the number of migrant workers who yearly traveled to Chicago.” By 1977, the IMC assured that there were approximately “400 migrant workers who live in housing provided by farmers and nursery owners and perhaps another 500 that found lodging with relatives and friends in the area.” Local members like Salazar stated, migrant camps were decreasing, not only in the Chicago area, but also in central and southern Illinois, where they do most of the work. He said, “with machinery and fewer migrant workers, these camps couldn’t be regulated by the state. We have seen this around the state, and I am sure that this will continue to happen this summer in the Chicago area, where there are already fewer migrant workers.” According to Salazar, employers, farmers and nurserymen, “opted for machinery” rather than workers, as they avoided state regulations for migrant workers. In fact, Eloy Salazar, director of field operations for the IMC’s Chicago office, mentioned that although the migrant’s situation did not receive the same national attention years ago.” During

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372 Michelle Gaspar, Chicago has a Migrant Problem, Chicago Tribune, May 3, 1979.
373 Michelle Gaspar, Chicago has a Migrant Problem, Chicago Tribune, May 3, 1979.
374 Michelle Gaspar, Chicago has a Migrant Problem, Chicago Tribune, May 3, 1979.
the summer of 1979, the IMC expected more public debates on issues affecting migrants in labor camps. Salazar outlined the direction of the IMC activism that made immigrant workers’ grievances visible.

As Michelle Gaspar noted, while the state legislature adopted the 1972 Illinois Migrant Labor Camp Act, the IMC still reported the concerns about employers allegedly abusing migrant workers. Throughout the 1970s, they continued securing legislation for fair employment policies for migrant workers. The 1972 law provided criteria for housing standards and sanitation camps, and “even though persons working for state agencies and migrant groups said that the legislation benefitted the migrants, different types of migrant problems were foreseen for the summer of 1979.” To that end, the IMC continued providing key resources and advocating for Illinois agricultural migrant workers.

Conclusion

The cooperation of state agencies and local immigrant organizations, like the IMC and ICMC, helped to develop an efficient network of activists in the state of Illinois. Similar to the Study Commission, the IMC had been advocating for the rights of Latino agricultural workers and residents since the 1960s. However, during the 1970s, the IMC was able to decentralize its Chicago based operation headquarters to expand local offices throughout the state. The work of the IMC, the Study Commission for Latinos, and the Illinois Commission for Migrant Children represented a step forward in the fight for immigrant rights in the state. They actively cooperated together, and specifically the IMC and SSPC helped to pass legislation that expanded

rights for migrant workers and also proposed state polices that could provide housing opportunities and health care for migrant families. Thus, like in the 1960s, the work of the Study Commission continued to focus on education reform and bilingual education. They added new reform objectives to obtain migrant workers’ rights, a common purpose that the IMC and other social agencies of the states shared.

The IMC opened offices and helped immigrants in varied counties in Illinois with the purpose of actively fighting for the rights of agricultural workers at the local level. During the 1970s the IMC, embraced a wide-ranging focus, which contrasted with more specified organizations that collaborated with state agencies, such as the ICMC that provided individual services such as health care and housing. This commission’s platform demonstrated how state agencies in Illinois created independent commissions to work with migrant families.

Even with IMC’s resources and collaborations with the SSPC, the conditions for migrant workers in Illinois continued to be difficult. During the 1960s and the 1970s, the state received an influx of migrant workers who faced a great scarcity of employment opportunities in the agricultural sector as well as limited housing conditions. Organizations like the IMC argued that in order to solve the problems of migrant workers they had to decentralize the council, expanding from the city to migrant camps and farms in the state. The IMC opened offices in Elk Grove, DeKalb, and Palatine, among others areas.377

Similar to the SSPC, the IMC stressed the importance of organizing politically, contesting local immigrant laws, and organizing registration drives and marches. The IMC also

377 Illinois Migrant Council in 1970 expanded offices especially DeKalb county. See legal cases in DeKalb County Records.
worked with Latino farm unions across the United States. Reports indicated that from the 1970s onward, problems for migrants in Illinois continued and many had to return to their homes [in Latin America]. One article from the Chicago Tribune reported, “Migrant farm workers watch their jobs dry up, as over 6,300 workers were stranded in Chicago area as drought worsened.”

The IMC continued working directly with these migrant workers and their families and with other immigration activists from state and local organizations.

Ultimately, local organizations that fought for Latino immigrant rights were able to collaborate in different stages to advance legislation that was beneficial to all immigrants. In this chapter, I have centered on the actions of immigration activists in Illinois during the 1960s and 1970s, and argued that they were able to develop alliances on different levels of government, local and state, in order to secure rights for immigrant workers and families. Immigration activists developed various proposals as well as other activities, such as subcommittees on social and political concerns, and prepared task forces and special hearings on migrant employment and economic equality. Although these organizations had similar reform objectives, they advocated for immigrant rights at different levels.

In the 1970s, the SSPC or Study Commission continued working for migrant workers’ rights at the state level as they had in the 1960s. However, in the 1970s, they embraced new programs including bilingual and bicultural education in Illinois, and successfully helped pass favorable legislation for Latino immigrants. Members from the SSPC collaborated with immigration reformers of the IMC and created alliances with participants of subcommittees,

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378 Migrant farm workers watch their jobs dry up: 6,300 stranded in Chicago area as drought worsens in Illinois, Chicago Tribune, July 17, 1988.
expanding their work from the city of Chicago to Chicago area suburbs and counties. In the case of the IMC, this shift away from city headquarters into central Illinois was an important step in the decentralization process of the council.

The alliances of SSPC, ICMC, and IMC ultimately showed that immigration activism needed to integrate different reform methods in order to effectively defend the rights of migrant workers. During the 1970s, immigration activists in Illinois were able to coordinate efforts, either in collaboration with the Spanish Speaking People Study Commission, the Illinois Committee for Migrant Children, and the Illinois Migrant Council, or as active participants in immigration reforms and legislation. These reformers advocated for better conditions for immigrant workers and agricultural workers, not only pushing to pass new amendments to Illinois immigration laws but also attending to the grievances of immigrant farm workers and residents in Chicago’s expanding suburbs. Chicago received many agricultural workers who traveled across the Midwest, and temporary agricultural workers became new residents. As some settled in the state, immigrant workers joined reformers in fighting for their rights and in expanding services for Latino immigrant families. This collaboration of immigrant activists with agencies like the ICMC and IMC aimed to provide access to better services and employment opportunities. In turn, the state level proposals of the members of the Study Commission were useful for organizations that locally were advocating for immigrants’ rights.
Chapter 4

Local Immigration Activism during the late 1960s and 1970s: The Latino Institute and *Mujeres Latinas en Acción* (Latina Women in Action)

The Latino Institute was formed by a group of people from various Spanish-speaking communities in Chicago, who were greatly concerned about the powerlessness and deprivation of the Latino community in Chicago during the 1970s. They aimed to equip leaders and potential activists of Chicago’s Latino population “for effective and unified participation in the decision making process that affected their communities.” Above all, they aspired to solve the social inequities of their communities by developing broader and extensive strategies. In this chapter, I argue that the members of the Latino Institute intertwined immigrant rights activism with community advocacy, which aimed to create change in Latino neighborhoods and empower local leaders. The activists of the Latino Institute in the 1970s paralleled the agenda of the settlement reformers of Immigrant Protective League (IPL) during the 1940s and 1950s. The Latino Institute and other settlements put immigrant rights on the agenda of state legislation and services. Here I explain how immigrant advocacy groups during the 1960s and 1970s incorporated elements of the social programs previously used by settlement house activists in Chicago.

During the 1970s, the relationship between the Latino Institute and Chicago Commons (Chicago Commons) was so strong that through their collaboration they expanded immigrant

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381 Latino Institute, *Mission of the Program*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago, Illinois.
rights activism in Chicago. The Chicago Commons’ settlement involvement with social reformers from the Latino Institute helped to fight for immigration and social equality, a relationship that actually dated back to the late 1960s. Throughout the 1970s, they also shared common reform objectives with Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA) and with organizations such as the Spanish Speaking People Commission and Illinois Migrant Council. This relationship, between the Latino Institute and Chicago Commons, was significant because it paralleled the collaboration of Chicago Commons and the Immigrant Protective League and Northwestern Settlement during the 1940s and 1950s. I contend that, the Chicago Commons’ outlook departed from the traditional settlement house program. According to the Chicago Common members, their activism reached “far beyond charity and ‘doing things’ for people.”

Their goals were to eliminate social inequalities and injustice, and that although other groups like the Spanish Speaking Peoples' Commission had achieved passing legislation in favor of all Latinos in the state, it was not until the late 1960s and 1970s that Latino community activism began to get acknowledged, locally solving problems and claiming social change.

The Latino Institute was one example of that localized activism in Chicago. In 1974, the members of the Latino Institute stated their intentions to develop the “action oriented capabilities of the Latino Institute in order to focus on problems and issues, institutions and policies, directly and significantly affecting our communities.” They wanted to serve well the “half millions Latinos in the Chicago area.” To that end, they put in place programs and projects to be developed and implemented by either the Institute or in conjunction with other Latino

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382 Latino Institute, *New Directions*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago, Illinois.
383 Latino Institute, *Mission of the Program*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
organizations that could work as an extension of their programs. I analyze how the Latino Institute operated a variety of programs in several areas and provided services that directly addressed the development of the Latino immigrants’ communities. They were quite successful mobilizing activists and reformers. The major programs and activities were to provide training, build alliances among Latino organizations and community groups, serving as a immigrant employment research and documentation center, and to assist Latino community organizations in raising funds and planning programs that met specific community needs.  

This chapter charts the development of immigrant activism over time in local and community organizations of Chicago, namely: The Latino Institute, The Chicago Commons, and MLEA. I analyze the original alliances and collaboration of these groups during the late 1960s and 1970s and examine their participation in conferences and initiatives like Strategies for Jobs in the 1970s. The Latino Institute worked in partnership with the Chicago Commons and expanded their relationship with MLEA. The Chicago Commons’ affiliation to these groups is central to the story, which is why I explain the type of settlement the Chicago Commons was in 1974 when they decided to lock a partnership with Latino organizations. The work of these organizations overlapped in time. Ever since the 1960s “Aquí Estamos” or “We are Here” campaigns and after the 1971 conference, Spanish Coalitions for Jobs and the 1970s Latino Strategies, the MLEA, the Latino Institute and Chicago Commons worked together to recognize Latino immigrant rights and fight for Latino social equality. This collaboration was consistent with the literature on Latino and Chicano activism in the United States. Consequently, the work of the Latino Institute and MLEA represented the early stages of Latino local and immigration

384 Latino Institute, Institutional History. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
activism in Chicago. Resembling previous activist groups like the IMC and IPL, this activism developed incorporating local efforts of multiple Latino communities and Chicano groups in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Chicago Commons and the Latino Institute: Settlement Activism**

Throughout the twentieth century, the Chicago Commons settlements worked to lessen neighborhood tensions and divert energies “from strife to striving.” The members of this settlement viewed the development of the Commons during its first years as parallel to the rise of the “Group Work, a program—[which] was a first, on an every-volunteer-welcome basis, [that developed] against an increasing background of theory.” The Chicago Commons settlements had a transformative agenda of social reform and immigration advocacy. “In the early 1900s, the newly constructed Common settlement on Grand and Morgan Street was the forum for the first public anti-establishment speeches to be made since the Haymarket Riots in the 1880s, Chicago Commons, running slightly ahead of its own develop- with-the-neighborhood approach, was one of Chicago’s inter-racial programming.” The Chicago Commons’ settlement moved their agenda of social equality forward. The Chicago Commons showed a strong commitment to solving urban problems, thus “concomitant with alleviating misery,” “took risks from time to time.”

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386 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.

387 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.

388 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
time” by fighting for the urban poor. They began working as social reformers in Chicago anti-poverty campaigns of the 1930s. With some setbacks during the Great Depression, when Graham Taylor’s daughter Lea had assumed the leadership of the agency, Common’s staff and clients “sought to dramatize the plight of starving welfare recipients.”

They helped individual in abject poverty by expanding advocacy on social services and funding opportunity for local organization, including the Latino Institute and many Chicago settlement reformers. This chapter explains how these organizations collaborated in favor of Latino rights. Ultimately, the Chicago Commons’ fights against inequalities helped to advance Latino activism in the city.

The Chicago Commons became involved with Latino community organizations, like the Latino Institute, and with employment service operations in several of the major inner city communities. The Latino Institute history connects with that of the Settlement houses, specifically with the Chicago Commons Association. These groups worked with large numbers of Puerto Ricans who began arriving in the Division Street and Grand Avenue areas of West Town. Together, they developed new platforms by which to contest social inequalities and economic disparities. The novelty of these activists is that they used local level strategies, voicing the grievances of Latino groups and community residents in Chicago.

The Latino Institute argued that regardless “of the cultural disparities among Chicago Latinos, it was painfully evident that they shared serious political, economic, and social problems, including, first, “political powerlessness, growing out of fragmented communities and

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389 Latino Institute, *Historical Perspective*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
390 Latino Institute, *Historical Perspective*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
391 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
geographic and cultural isolation.” Second, they argued that Latinos faced “poverty and unemployment, which resulted from inequity in employment practices and the erosion of factory and manual jobs, the Latinos’ employment base.” Third, they encountered problems such as “educational deficits, due to an insensitive and unresponsive educational business.” Fourth, they aimed to solve the problem of “deteriorating neighborhoods and housing, due to unequal distribution of the city’s financial institutions.” The Institute’s activists constantly worked on these problems throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

During the 1960s, the Latino Institute activists fought for Latino rights by making Latino inequality a priority of their work and by contesting the invisibility of Latinos in the city. The Latino Institute understood that, these problems were exacerbated by the Latinos’ marginalization that creates a “sense of isolation and invisibility,” of “feeling buried” — statistically, politically, and in the media [in a category of otherness: not black and white]. They stated that, “During the upheavals of the 1960s, one of the first concerted Latino outcries was Aqui Estamos or “We are Here.” On the term of Latino, they spoke about how the term “Latino was an elusive category: an urban dweller of Hispanic Origin.” In fact, Chicago’s Latino population was quite diverse, and included at least 22 nationalities, where there was no homogeneity among them, and each maintained their culture, customs, and beliefs. Thus,

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392 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
393 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
394 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago. They argued that “as the 60s dawned…. the problems persisted.”
395 Latino Institute, *Institutional History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
396 Latino Institute, *The History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
397 Latino Institute, *The History*. DePaul University Special Collections and Archives DePaul University, Chicago. See Publication of Aqui Estamos—(We are Here 1960s.)
Latino activists recognized that the “We are Here” campaigns helped them to pool resources with other Chicago reformers.

The Institute was called an “experiment without precedent” because it represented Chicago’s Hispanic experiences and diverse population, fighting against urban problems also without precedent.398 Following the influx of Latinos in the twentieth century to the big cities, the Institute became an important resource for Latino immigrants. The members of the Latino Institute worked with immigrants, when “Mexican immigrants were enticed northward to provide reliable and underpaid labor for the city’s booming railroad, mills, and factories.” In addition to that, they worked with migrants from throughout Latin America: Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America.399

In the late 1960s, the Chicago Commons consolidated six-strategically located settlements and three camps into one large citywide service program. As one of Chicago’s largest social agencies, the Commons faced new challenges to help disadvantaged people overcome abject poverty. The members recognized that they “cannot solve all the problems of Chicago.” But they believed that through its determination to work with the most disadvantaged neighborhoods to improve housing conditions, they could find “employment opportunities, upgrade education and provide better health facilities and services…”400 Thus, they could change the social conditions of immigrants in Chicago.

In 1967, the Chicago Commons settlement became one of the largest social agencies in Chicago “when the boards of Mary McDowell Settlement House, Olivet Community Center,

398 Latino Institute, Institutional History. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
399 Latino Institute, The History. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
400 Chicago Commons, New Directions 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Benton House, and Camp Reinberg voted to merge with the agency.”

The consolidation was urged by the Community Fund to avoid expensive overlapping of services among agencies and to encourage programs over a broader area. They argued “out of this desire came a formal commitment, adopted by the Board in 1968.” They worked “with the people in the city of Chicago, who, in the search for a useful and satisfying life, have the fewest alternatives” Our of this commitment, the Chicago Commons hired a new executive director “to lead the agency’s new mission and ultimately, a plan called Program for Change.”

The settlement workers, with their work for the Chicago Commons, helped to develop immigration activism.

In 1968, the Chicago Commons developed the “new direction plan” to help to alleviate Chicago’s urban crisis. They argued that “cities [were] in crisis and turmoil” They stressed that, “In spite of general economic prosperity, large segments of our population live in poverty” and provided as examples “dilapidated housing, without adequate health facilities, with insufficient job opportunities, and suffering from inferior education, outmoded welfare legislation, racial discrimination and social isolation.” The conditions led to stark confrontations, tensions, and unrest and ultimately led to outbreaks of violence and riots. They determined to contest racial violence, “unless white, affluent communities began to move broadly to eliminate the causes of frustration and unrest.”

The Chicago Commons contested segregation in Chicago and exposed Latino racial grievances.

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401 Chicago Commons, New Directions 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
402 Chicago Commons, New Directions 2. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
403 Chicago Commons, New Directions 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
The Chicago Commons was “deep in the struggle for social reform and human progress throughout its 75 year history.” The Commons settlement was a pioneer in interracial programming. It helped built solidarity and pride in neighborhoods. It had been an innovator in developing educational and development programs for children and adults. The activists of the Chicago Commons dedicated its resources, facilities and staff to helping people in depressing neighborhoods “to provide these people with greater alternatives in the search for a useful and satisfying life.” Commons sought out neighborhoods “where the needs were greatest and commit itself to action designed to alleviate these needs.” For this reason I view that “this new direction” paralleled traditional settlement house program. According to the Chicago Common members, their activism reached “far beyond charity and ‘doing things’ for people.” They were hopefully that they could “eliminate the inequalities and injustices, which are at the root of our problems today…” Chicago Commons’ new relationship with the Latino Institute helped them offer many of their Latino advocacy programs.

As a settlement house, they made special efforts to reach teenagers and newcomers to the city, especially working African Americans families, as well as Latino groups like Puerto Ricans and Mexican immigrants. In order to provide better opportunities for ethnic minorities in the city, the Chicago Commons actively assisted “the development of neighborhood leadership organizations” and provided the people who lived in the neighborhoods with an opportunity to learn, how to voice their grievances and how to create change.

404 Chicago Commons, *New Directions 1*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
405 Chicago Commons, *New Directions 1*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
406 Chicago Commons, *New Directions 1*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
407 Chicago Commons, *Services and Programs 3*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
During the 1970s, Chicago Latino reformers organized and collaborated on issues of immigrant equality. For example, The Spanish Coalitions for Jobs was organized in May 1971 to begin dealing with high unemployment rate in the Latino Barrios in Chicago. Many member agencies were offering job referral services, as many employers were “reluctant to hire Latinos.” This was a coalition of twenty-three community organizations and ten employment agencies from the Pilsen, Lakeview, and West Town community areas of Chicago. They contended that this coalition “produced more than job development” for the Coalition enabled Chicanos and Puerto Ricans to work together in unity perhaps for the first time in Chicago. Although attempts have been made to destroy that working relationship. These attempts have not succeeded. 408 Thus, they argued that their association could only be a benefit to emerging Latino communities in Chicago.

They worked together again in 1972 for the Spanish Coalition for Jobs, a campaign to generate employment for Latino groups and to take action on issues of housing, education, welfare, and economic development. In fact, “the “one-year coalition of over twenty Mexican and Puerto Rican groups [was] successful in persuading the utility companies and several large construction firms to develop job openings for Latinos.” 409 Furthermore in March 1973, a Conference called “Latino Strategies for the 70s” was held at the McCormick Theological Seminar, which the Rockefeller Foundation funded and convened with the aid of the Chicago Commons Association. They described that, “More than 300 Latinos attended the Latin Strategies for the 70s.” They attended the Conference from the “inner city and suburbs, from

408 Chicago Commons, Hector Franco, Latino Strategies. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
409 Chicago Commons, Statement of Purpose 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
neighborhood churches and settlement houses, and from the financial bastions of La Salle Street.” Moreover, they represented a diverse Latino civic front from “virtually every social and political point of view.”¹⁴¹⁰ This heterogeneity among Latino reformers helped to advance local level immigration activism.

The conference worked on action plans for the 1970s and strengthened the original Coalition for Jobs. The coordinator of the Conference, Hector Franco, stated, “Thirteen workshops convened to dialogue” and developed alternatives for the pressing immigration issues and social grievances of local residents and reformers. This conference was the first regional Latino strategy session in the Midwest. “The effort was best described as a broad-based Latino venture into self-determination and self-development. The intensive issues oriented workshops produced commitments on the part of its participants and professionals.” In fact:

[The atmosphere of the Conference reflected the times: it was charged with anger, elation, frustrations, energy and hopes. Issues were raised and fought over, won and lost. In the end, the three legacies of the Conference were: First, A recognition that before progress could be achieved Latinos would have to unite behind a common purpose, despite differences in national origin and ethnic culture. It was about time that Chicago’s Hispanic population began [to be recognized] as Latinos. Second, A growing awareness among Latinos that while the civil rights strategies employed by African Americans worked for African Americans, Latinos would have to develop their own, suited to their needs, goals, and character. Third legacy, by the way of the Chicago Commons, was the Chicago Latino Institute.]¹⁴¹¹

Franco added, this conference was an expression of togetherness in el Barrio, “the most together expression of el Oro del Barrio.” They argued that it was the first time that a “significant portion of the Latino community was able to identify quality of expertise and potential among its people.”¹⁴¹² Out of that context, Latino women formed Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA) during the 1960-70s. These reformers from the MLEA worked in collaboration with the Chicago

¹⁴¹⁰ Chicago Commons, Statement of Purpose 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
¹⁴¹¹ Latino Institute, The History. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
¹⁴¹² Chicago Commons, Hector Franco, Latino Strategies/ Statement of Purpose 1. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Commons and the Latino Institute, thus it is important to first discuss the work of the MLEA and the relationship of MLEA to the Spanish Coalition for Jobs.

*Mujeres Latinas en Acción (Latina Women in Action)*

Historian Debra Westlake interviewed the MLEA leader, Maria Mangual, who stated that “what we were trying to do with (MLEA) was to organize women in a community where women were not traditionally the leaders-they were workers; they were not powerful”. They were making a statement that it was time for women to be upfront leaders and that we were that wave.”

MLEA worked in the Pilsen community on Chicago’s lower west side, centered around 18th Street. Westlake wrote the paper “Mujeres Adelante: the Early history of Mujeres Latinas en Acción – 1973-1980” for a U.S. Women’s History course at the University of Chicago with Professor Linda Kerber.

Westlake described, “what began as an informal gathering of local women who lived in the same block of apartments in Pilsen [became] the first social service agency exclusively for Latina women in the city.” Although their programs helped in the wider Latino Community—beyond the boundaries of just Pilsen it was still “the only organization of its kind in Chicago.”

In her view, in the 1950s “a Bohemian and Czech colony, [Pilsen] became a port of entry for the enormous immigration of Mexicans and Mexican Immigrants in the 1960s and 70s. According to Westlake’s data, by the 1970s, Pilsen contained over 40% of the city of Chicago’s Latino

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It became one of Chicago’s first predominantly Mexican American and immigrant communities.

In a formal interview with Maria Manual, Westlake traced the original development of MLEA from the late 1960s and early 1970s social activism. Mangual viewed the initial movement, which was to “become “Mujeres Latinas…(MLEA)” as a “product of the 70s, at the end of the tumultuous sixties, with the race riots, the beginning of the Chicano movement… the women’s movement…” The National Organization for Women (NOW) “became a voice” and in this context “we were a group of women working in community service agencies [but] we were the drones doing all the work in organizations run by men…” Mangual asserted that these women activists and their alliances helped in the creation of MLEA.

Thus, “the background to the formation of the [MLEA] comprised a nationwide environment of political and social reform as well as local changes in the Latino community and a sense of injustice and unequal treatment amongst women.” Westlake also argued that “the civil rights movement opened a way for protests of inequality by Latinos and other minority groups, the civil rights act of 1964 initiated the formation of an Affirmative Action policy which was to have a significant impact on Latino community.” In that regard, “it gave legitimacy to claims of employers discrimination” made by organizations like the Spanish Coalition for Jobs. She alleged that the Spanish Coalition for Jobs was “the first expression of a Latino ethnic consciousness in the city” during the early 1970s in Chicago. Ultimately, this expression of Latino ethnic consciousness indicated “the growing politicization of the Mexican American

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community in Pilsen,” which was one of the poorest communities in the city, as described by a Chicago newspaper in 1971.418

As early as the 1970s, community organizations began contesting the conditions of the Mexican community in Pilsen. They claimed, “the area was plagued by overcrowding, substandard housing, and poor sanitation conditions,” which newcomers had encountered in addition to experiencing language barriers.419 Westlake stated “the combination of rising political consciousness and the creation of creative federalism programs by President Kennedy” and carried through by Johnson to channel funds into inner-city communities meant the community was beginning to fight for development and renewal of their communities through organizations like MLEA.

Westlake’s paper looked at the story of activist women, their “interests and concerns in embarking on forming an organization for Latina women.” She explored MLEA’s goals and strategies during the 1970s and 1980s and examined the “factors leading to the development of the core services to youth and victims of domestic violence.” Although she contended that her paper was just “one interpretation of the story,” it was an important one because it was based on an interview with one of the earliest and most influential leaders of the original group, Maria Mangual. She acknowledged there were other women activists who helped found MLEA “whose stories remained to be told… … the formative stages of the organization were fluid, and dynamic and as such, each member [would have] their own interpretation of events and agendas.” The significance of Westlake’s text was that it gathered information on some of those founders, who

418 Chicago Daily News, September 30, 1971.[Also in Westlake Introduction 1-3]. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
419 Westlake, Introduction 1-3. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
“were spread around the city and country—some remained in contact with the organization, others diverted their energy to new projects.” Mangual thought their new roles “in themselves attest to Mujeres’ success” in empowering women; a testament to the long lasting commitment of MLEA activists to social advocacy.420

In fact, MLEA became a bilingual and bicultural agency, which provided social services to Latinas and their families. In 1973, it started as a program run by volunteers who recognized “the severe shortage of social welfare services sensitive to the needs of Latinas and their families.” MLEA had approximately fifteen members all of whom were active in the community. The history of this agency was “intimately linked to the issues of domestic violence and youth services.” This organization claimed to be “the only agency in Illinois dedicated to providing social services to Latinas” and was administered by Latinas.

The mission of MLEA was “to empower women, their families, and youth to become self-reliant and able to take full advantage of available opportunities, to improve the quality of their lives.” In order to empower Latinas, they proposed to provide “comprehensive services, which integrated activities to assist in exploring choices, make informed decisions … and enhance daily living and problem solving skills.” In addition, they undertook “policy analysis” and advocated with and on behalf of their constituencies. The MLEA prioritized low income, limited English proficient Latina women, high-risk youth and their families, and victims of domestic violence.

MLEA members were mostly residents of the Pilsen area of Chicago, which was “the largest Chicano barrio in the Midwest.”\(^{421}\) This group began collaborating after a statewide conference for Latina women in June 1973.\(^{422}\) Some of the women who attended this conference continued to meet weekly with the goal of providing social services to women in the community. For example, during the fall of 1973, a series of workshops was held on issues such as “Planned Parenthood, the role of Latina women and Women and the Law.” By the spring of 1974, MLEA had “obtained a lease on a two story building form El Centro de la Causa that they used as a Drop in Center for teen girls.” Also, during the spring and the summer of that year, “a [separate] food Co-Op” operated out of this building.\(^{423}\) Moreover, they “spent the summer cleaning the building, which was in a bad state of repair.” Then in September, the building burned down to the ground. MLEA decided to undertake some fund raising to get rent money for a new facility. “They held a raffle and two dances in December 1974 and raised $1,700.00.”\(^{424}\) Still, the organization gathered enough support from community members, helping MLEA members not only to reconstruct the building but also to cooperate with the center’s reform projects.

Despite the setbacks of December 1974, MLEA continued providing social services to women and advocating for the insertion of Latina women in the community. MLEA aimed to correct the community’s negative factors as they felt that “Latinas were overlooked by existing social service agencies, which [were] geared toward young males.” In addition, they argued that there were “no health facilities for women in the community and that the high school dropout

\(^{421}\) Mujeres Latinas en Acción, *MLEA Records*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\(^{422}\) *MLEA Records*, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\(^{423}\) *MLEA Records*, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\(^{424}\) *MLEA Records*, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
rate in the local high school [was] 85%.” According to this organization, Pilsen’s “recreation programs and various agencies tended to emphasize male intra-mural sports that were not oriented towards sports for women or girls.” 425 MLEA held that in addition to “the lack of available services, there [was] evidence that young girls in the community [had] serious problems that were not being addressed.” They described, “Numerous runaways were identified by existing agencies but nothing organized was being done to help these girls.” In addition, the dropout rate in high school included a “high number of girls who drop out because of unwanted pregnancies.” Besides, sex education in the local high school was minimal and outdated.” 426 MLEA activists built support from within the Latino community in Pilsen, expanding programs directed at Latino families that claimed a lack of effective programs for women.

MLEA’s programs focused on the problems of immigrant women and in improving the operations of the Drop-In Center, which was a place to access services and help. They stated that MLEA members encountered specific cases in the month of January 1975. They reported several cases: “a runaway girl case, a rape case where the young girl was 15 years, a teenager who had substance abuse problems, and a case of an undocumented Mexican immigrant woman living in the U.S, who was pregnant and being threatened with deportation.” These were just some four examples of the serious problems that the women activists encountered at the MLEA’s Drop-In Center, along with immigrant women cases.

Active volunteers organized the Drop-In Center that helped employed Latina women residents of the community. Primarily volunteers from MLEA staffed it, but in 1975 an

425 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
426 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
administrative coordinator was recruited to plan programs, raise funds, and coordinate the volunteers. The Drop-In Center was housed on 18th street and it was “decorated in a warm, attractive manner.” The members viewed that it was best to create an “informal atmosphere where teenage girls would feel comfortable.” Because of certain cultural values, many young girls were not allowed to visit unless their parents believed that they were “adequately chaperoned.” There was also a variety of recreation and educational activities, as members of MLEA did outreach activities in two high schools. Two members of the group stated “we were already going to one local school twice a week.” Moreover, “The Drop In Center attracted girls in part because of the social atmosphere and in part through outreach in the schools.” Thus, the MLEA housed, hired, and trained women in community; they developed programs similar to those of the settlement houses, like the Chicago Commons and IPL, and expanded a social advocacy model similar to the Latino Institute.

MLEA aimed to develop the Drop-In Center as a social outreach program. The members viewed the work of the center, “as both as a service center for young girls and as a potential [meeting place] to intervene in problems” or in situations of crisis. They planned to involve the girls themselves in running the Center and maintaining it. They stated, “When the girls came in with problems, [they were] encouraged to work in the center helping the staff and members volunteers.” All of the women in MLEA went through a six week training course in counseling skills provided by the Illinois Juvenile Research Center. They argued that “when more specialized problems [were] encountered, referrals for more specialized agencies [were] 

427 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
428 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
429 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
made,” and that members of MLEA accompanied them and followed up on their cases. For example, two members of MLEA offered some clinical services in a volunteer basis: a psychiatry social worker and a guidance counselor, both who worked in community schools. They developed a “resource file” with listings and evaluations of social service agencies citywide. In addition, they already had close ties to a number of existing programs, assuring their cooperation. This model of a local community center is consistent with historians’ descriptions of the social movements of Latino and African Americans communities in Chicago. I argue both MLEA and the Latino Institute used a local model of activism to push for Latino immigrant’s right activism.

The MLEA had a close relationship with other agencies and organizations of Pilsen’s Latino community. At least five members of the MLEA were on the Advisory Committee of the Pilsen Mental Health Mother-Infant Project. They established a “close linkage between the Drop In Center and the planned Outreach Component of the Pilsen Mental Health Center and Mother-Infant Project.” In addition, the Pilsen Mental Health Center “agreed to accept referrals sent from the Drop In Center for individual or family therapy.” They also had an agreement with “the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program to accept referrals to their Educational Components for basic literacy and G.E.D. classes.” Lastly, they established “close ties with El Hogar del Niño Day Care Center, La Paz Child Development Project, Little Village Mental Health Center, and El Centro de la Causa.”

Although these organizations were not affiliated with MLEA, over time they developed close relationships and became supporters of MLEA activists.

431 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
By establishing working relations, the MLEA members received a good deal of support and cooperation from existing agencies in the community, who recognized “the need for the services [they were] proposing.” They intended “to utilize a network model for services” and viewed that their role was to establish the initial contact and to provide the following up sessions. They also aimed to operate as a center for “basic counseling and crisis” intervention. Generally, they attempted “not to duplicate the services, but rather assured that women [were] receiving the services.” Thus, the activism of MLEA had quite a varied focus and was unique because it combined social services with community advocacy.

On April 1, 1975, they moved into the new Drop In Center that, during the summer, operated five days a week from 9am to 6pm. They stated that, “the facility was large enough for community meetings, workshops, and other types of activities.” They explored the possibility of creating a shelter care home for runaway girls. But they had only received funding for one staff position to develop foster homes. During that year, they planned to establish a care home center that could be available to house girls on an emergency basis. By the end of the fiscal year, they established a core of volunteer foster parents as well as documented the extent of the runaway problems in the community. A year before of the foundation of MLEA, the Latino Institute had started developing its own immigration activism and reform strategies. Both organizations originated during the early 1970s, between 1973 and 1974.

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432 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
433 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
434 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
435 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
436 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Latino Institute and Chicago Commons Task Force

During the 1970s, the Latino institute aimed to advance collaboration between group committees and to create a working task force program. They wanted to unite “individuals from all segments of the Latino communities, including persons who participated in the Conference and many who did not.” As a result of the cooperation between the Commons Association and the communities, several Latino members of the Chicago Commons Association formed a task force to concretize their concerns and to find a way to implement their ideas. To that end, the Latino Institute developed programs and used its resources when issues arose that were handled according to a specific criteria, such as the significance to the community, capability of the Institute, adequacy of resources, opportunity for obtaining results, and commitment to the Institute polices, current work program and budget. The director, Maria Cerdá, oversaw the activities of the several subgroups and boards.

The board of the new Latino Institute interlocked with that of the Chicago Commons, which included Frank Seever, Executive Director of Chicago Commons Association. By 1974 a majority of the Latino Institute members were Latino or of Latino background, thirteen in total. Its founding members included Fidel Lopez, Carolyn Bergan and Donald Duster. On the relationship with the Chicago Commons, Mario Aranda stated that, the Latino Institute —“owed its existence to the good people who make good things happen: people like Frank Seever, Executive Director of the Chicago Commons Association, and the director of Commons, who

437 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
438 Chicago Commons, Task Force. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
439 Chicago Commons, Task Force. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
440 Chicago Commons, Task Force, 1974. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
took the risk of founding the Institute and have remained loyal through our hard times and our successes. Latinos like Fidel Lopez, who [had] been constantly vigilant and supportive, greatly adding [to our] stability. And he stressed that Maria Cerdá, was a true urban pioneer, “who has opened new trails and new visions for us all.” This interlocking of the Latino Institute with the Chicago Commons opened the door for Maria Cerdá’s activism.

With the help of the Chicago Commons, a startup grant was obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation, and that’s when Maria Cerdá accepted the position of executive director and thus, “the Latino Institute was launched.” According to Carolyn Bergan, founding member and Trustee of the Latino Institute, “the original relationship with the Chicago Commons was scheduled to be a three-year relationship, where Commons would be a fiscal agent…” Maria Cerdá talked IMB into allowing the Institute to have one executive member for a year, and he, in effect, became the business manager for the Latino Institute. For her it was an opportunity “to greatly speed up the development processes of the Institute.” Consequently, after two years, “the United Way invited the Latino Institute to apply for membership”. Cerdá worked to secure long-term funding from organizations such as IMB and United Way, agencies which provided funding for community development.

Cerdá became the executive director of the Latino Institute in 1974. Cerdá received her bachelors’ degree in psychology from the University of Puerto Rico and her master degree in Social Service Administrator from the University of Chicago. Cerdá served as a member of the

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441 Latino Institute, The Founding 1974. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
442 Latino Institute, The Founding 1974. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
443 Latino Institute, The Founding 1974. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
444 Latino Institute, The Founding 1974. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Chicago Board of Education for five years from 1969 to 1974. She came to the Institute with experience in the public sector, having worked with Latino parents and organizations concerned with the poor quality of education provided by the school system. “[These] experiences afforded Cerdá the opportunity of learning how the system operated internally, (at the staff level), how policy decisions were made (at the board level), and enabled her to establish relationships with both.”

Her working expertise and background made her an effective Latina activist for the Institute.

**Latino Institute Programs in Chicago**

The work of the Latino Institute centered around three key goals. First, the institute aimed to teach practical knowledge and techniques for solving urgent community problems. Second, they aimed to provide training opportunities for Latinos, so that they could transform and advocate for their communities, and third, they wanted to build alliances with other organizations in the Chicago area. Throughout the 1970s, they aspired “to develop a National Advisory Council composed of influential Latinos from all parts of country in order to gain a broader input and perspective, thus placing the Latino Institute in a broad national context.” Consequently, when the institute started operations it had a strict agenda of Latino community development.

The level of commitment of the members of the Institute corresponded to the needs of Latino communities and organizations in Chicago. Building alliances helped them to create lasting Latino growth and change. For instance, Maria Bechily–Hodes, president of the Latino Institute Corporate Board of Trustees, believed “Latinos were politically a decisive group that

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445 Latino Institute, *Statement of Purpose 3*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
446 Latino Institute, *Program Description 1974*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
can decide major policy issues affecting the whole city.” She stated, “that Latinos will have a
say so, whether it’s the expansion of playgrounds… whether it’s new housing or city jobs.” In
addition, serving as president of the Board of Trustees, Edward Garcia explained his
commitment stemmed from a deep conviction that the Latino Institute was uniquely qualified to
meet the needs of the community. Moreover, according to Mario Aranda, executive director of
the Latino Institute, the Institute had “helped to assure that regardless of the social or economic
climate, the Latinos in Chicago will never again be invisible, powerless, and ignored. He was
optimistic in that the “future will be dedicated to acquiring and securing for Latinos an equitable
share in the dream of a better life.” Aranda worked with the Institute to expand Latino issues on
the city’s social agencies and institutions.

Latino Institute advocates like Bechily-Hodes added that in “many ways the Institute [had
been] able to clarify for the Anglo-community what the Latino community is all about.” She
described that Latinos were saying “to the corporations and foundations, You Know? There’s a
community out there called the Latino community.” And that “just because you give to a
Mexican American group on the South side doesn’t mean you’ve covered all the bases as far as
Latinos are concerned.” The Institute’s fight for equality challenged the place of Latinos in
the context of racial disparities in the city of Chicago.

This organization decided that, “rather than attempt to provide a single voice for all
Latinos, the Latino Institute had provided a forum from which Latinos voices may be joined and
heard.” That is, instead of attempting to serve individuals, they had to serve organizations, which

447 Latino Institute, *The First 10 years*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
448 Latino Institute, *The First 10 years*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
serve individuals, and thus foster and support local leadership. Consequently, this institute’s objectives were to equip potential activists of Chicago’s Latino communities for participation in the decision making process that affected their communities in order to improve the quality of life.

**Latino Institute Development Program in Chicago**

The Latino Institute operated a variety of programs in several areas. These programs locally addressed the devolvement of the Latino Community. The programs’ activities included providing a training institute where Latinos could develop new skills and experiences that would “allow them to be active participants in the solving of community problems.” In addition, they aimed to build alliances based on “mutual respect among Latino individuals, organizations and community groups for the purpose of developing collectively the strength needed to enter into constructive coalitions with other citizen groups, as co-equal contributors in the process of social change.” For that purpose, the Latino Institute intended to serve as a “research and documentation center” on Latino issues. They understood that they needed to assist the Latino community organizations and raise funds as well as plan programs that could meet “specific needs for development of neighborhoods and the larger Latino population.” Lastly, they provided “leadership and resources” to resolve major issues and problems that confronted the Latino communities of Chicago in the 1970s.

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449 Latino Institute, *The History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
450 Latino Institute, *The History*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
451 Latino Institute, *Latino Development Institute I*, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
In his January 7, 1974 column for the *Chicago Sun Times*, Reverend Ruben Cruz (who worked for SSPC) lamented, “In the past as in the present, we [Latinos] were still denied the opportunity to become involved in projects that were for the benefit of our own.”\textsuperscript{452} Cruz was the producer of Oiga Amigo (“Listen Friend”) a radio show that aired every Saturday at noon on WLS (channel 7). He was also a contributing editor to “Everyman,” which aired on WMAQ TV (Channel 5) at 9:30 am on Sundays and Wednesdays. In his *Sun Times* article, he noted that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) held a Conference in Chicago and commented that “the tragic aspect of this conference for us [was] that our community will not participate in any way.”\textsuperscript{453} He was arguing that other minority groups took the advantage of the EDA but the Latino Community did not receive anything. The EDA, an agency of the Commerce Department administered public works loans and grants, among other programs.\textsuperscript{454} Cruz expressed that “It was time that this situation changes.” He explained that the Latino Community also had received scant help form the Model Cities Programs in Chicago, which was headed by Erwin A. France. Cruz criticized France for stating that he “had surrounded himself with a staff of incompetent Latinos who were not capable of accomplishing much with [what] was provided for them.”\textsuperscript{455} As Cruz mentioned, “Latino leaders were generally left out of the decision making of their communities,” and thus the Latino Institute aimed to change that.

The Chicago Commons wanted to help a generation of immigrant workers in the city of Chicago. By 1974, several waves of Latino Immigrants preceded twenty years of active agency

\textsuperscript{452} *Los Latinos*, “Cruz Raps meeting for lack of Latinos” January 7, 1974.
\textsuperscript{453} *Los Latinos*, “Cruz Raps meeting for lack of Latinos” January 7, 1974.
\textsuperscript{454} *Los Latinos*, “Cruz Raps meeting for lack of Latinos” January 7, 1974.
\textsuperscript{455} *Los Latinos*, “Cruz Raps meeting for lack of Latinos” January 7, 1974.
involvement with substantial numbers of both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. The activists from the Latino Institute collaborated with the Chicago Commons engaging in community organizations and employment service operations in the key neighborhoods of the city. Places like Pilsen and organizations like MLEA became instrumental in advancing Chicago immigrant activism.

In 1974, the Chicago Commons presented a paper in which they outlined the plan for a new center for services with the purpose of enabling Latino communities of Chicago to develop organizations responsive to Latino community needs. To continue this effort, the Chicago Commons Association established the Latino Development Institute—“to broker with city agencies, businesses, and institutions to improve the Latino Community within the broader urban context.” They recognized that one major area in the Latino community where much concern had been voiced, but remained a nagging problem, was in providing positive alternatives for Latino youth, particularly those who were remaining in school with difficulty. The Latino Institute development programs allowed the “school to [remain] a focal point through which to develop integrated services to Latino youth” According to the Institute, Latinos sought greater cohesiveness as a community. They aspired to more firm upward mobility: “a stronger voice in their social and political determination.” The Latino Institute development programs helped the Institute in providing a training center for future community leaders and activists in Chicago.

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456 Latino Institute, *Section B Consistency with Present Agencies*, winter 1974 (undated). Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
457 Latino Institute, *Latino Youth Program April 1974*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
458 Latino Institute, *Latino Youth Program April 1974*. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
On March 18, 1975, Maria Cerdá and Frank Seever met to discuss ways to increase funding. At this meeting they talked at length about how the Institute could meet the projected goals and programs. They requested consideration from the Community Fund for an increase in its grant to the institute. “The original request was for 100,000,” and they felt their program deserved full funding from the Fund. Mr. Cousins “requested a short written report on the Latino Institute progress and promised further consideration of the Institute request.”

Although in the end, the Institute was not fully funded by the Community Fund, they were able to obtain sponsorships from other organizations like the Hummel Foundation.

The Latino Institute held regular meetings throughout the 1970s in which they prepared and agreed on the Institute’s programs. Fidel Lopez, the chairperson, called a meeting of the Latino Institute for late spring of 1975. This regular meeting of the Latino Institute Task force was held on Wednesday March 26, 1975 at the office of the Institute. In this meeting they discussed the Latino Institute Taskforce and reported on the By Laws Committee, the Policy Board Committee on Training, and also discussed other budget issues. A member of the Latino Institute, Ray Rodriguez, presented a report on the Bylaws Committee. Following the task meeting, “the consensus of the group was that the criteria for membership included a broad range of expertise, persons known for their active participation in community efforts, consciousness of the problem in the community and ability to transcend nationalistic approaches to issues.” At this point, the goals of the Institute were to gather local support and to create a broad constituency so that they could achieve some actual changes.

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459 Latino Institute, Minutes 1975. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
460 Latino Institute, Minutes, Wednesday March 26, 1975.
The meetings and programs of the Latino Institute were structured and organized for Latino communities. Members encouraged programs “enhancing the identity of the different components of the Latino community.” This is why they had to ensure the participation of long time neighbors of two major areas, “the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities,” a population that was especially considered a target of their programs. In the March 26, 1975 meeting, the By Laws committee also planned to meet so that they could “dialogue on the criteria for participation and to write a draft of the By Laws.” For that reason, Fidel López appointed a nomination committee consisting of three members, and he proposed members “for a three years term with a maximum of two consecutive terms.” Specifically, Donald Duster suggested that it was wise to consider inviting current members back after one inactive year.

Still, the Institute’s board and the Chicago Commons actively worked to establish the Latino Institute as an independent organization and not a sub-program of this settlement. Frank Seever argued that the purpose was to establish the task force that could “create a vehicle that would enable the Chicago Commons to initiate those steps necessary to create an independent organization that can address itself to the concerns of the Latino community.” As such, the Taskforce worked within the structure of the Chicago Commons, which provided central direction to the developing programs of the Institute and in establishing the mechanisms through which the Institute would become a viable and autonomous organization. Establishing an independent space to work on Latino issues expanded the funding opportunities of the Institute.

461 Latino Institute, Minutes, Wednesday March 26, 1975.
462 Latino Institute, Frank Seever, Members of the Latino Development Institute Task Force 1975.
Latino Institute Technical Assistance Program in 1975

The Latino Institute activists intended to strengthen community and neighborhood alliances by developing strategies on neighborhood development and organization. The technical assistance programs began in July 1975 with an assessment survey, “followed by nine workshops and a rapidly expanding direct individualized Technical Assistant project,” which centered on the disregarded needs of key Latino service organizations. An assessment survey “initiated and completed a required assessment of sixty-four community based Latino organizations that gained [first] hand information on the program, structure, and needs of the Latino Institute.”\textsuperscript{463} The technical assistance project was a way of systematizing the information of the services available for Latino organization. It provided the Latino Institute with “simple referral service to long-term assistance… such as resource sharing, proposal critique, editing, etc.”\textsuperscript{464} They contended, “A close look at specific local communities reveals numerous Latino leaders and community organizations that [were] beginning to build the strength they need.”\textsuperscript{465} Throughout the 1970s, members of the Latino Institute reunited with Latino community organizations to identify and solve their main concerns, including them in the Institute’s plan of action.

Latino Institute members recognized that even with some setbacks, the Institute was willing to make a meaningful impact. The Institute activists contended that “the enormous human suffering, the growing awareness and sense of concern among Latinos suggested that a more comprehensive approach [was] needed and that sporadic and localized neighborhood

\textsuperscript{463} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical Assistance Program}, “To solve the problems and find strategies for neighborhood devolvement.” Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{464} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{465} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}. 
activities should be strengthened and accelerated. …”466 They stressed the “importance of effective management and leadership within community organizations in bringing about social change.”467 The work of the Latino Institute did help to better distribute services for Latino immigrant communities.

Community organizations played an important role in the Latino Institute as their work responded to their specific grievances. For instance “community organizations [took] over many of the functions of initializing social change and marshalling community support for such changes that were once the exclusive province of local government and political parties.”468 For the Institute, these organizations became the forums of those “who in the past have been under-represented in the decision making process.”469 They claimed that, Latino community organizations had become critical means by which “orderly change could take place” through concentrated recruitment and coalitions.470

Latino Institute activists viewed that long before such change could take place, there were essential steps to take first.471 Their recruitment plan included community organizations that, through their volunteers, directors, and staffs, established and documented their own priorities, prepared them for presentations to people in positions to bring about change, and identified “their own authentic spokespersons to act as conveners on behalf of the community.”472 They argued that these first steps required skills, “which were possessed in varying degrees by

466 Latino Institute, Technical assistance program.
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472 Latino Institute, Technical assistance program.
residents of a community.” Most community organizations comprised a number of committees and boards, the majority of those members were relatively new in leadership positions, and this last point, according to the Latino Institute, was particularly true in the Latino community.\textsuperscript{473} They understood that the Latino community, “even the paid professional staff of these agencies and organizations lacked the level of skills possessed by professional staff outside the barrios…. But the fact that these skills [were] lacking in the Latino community [was] not a surprising fact when the reality of the Latino experience was considered.”\textsuperscript{474} They acknowledged that Latinos were comparatively “voiceless in influencing those decisions that affect the quality of their lives.”\textsuperscript{475} They stated that, “for many years there were no opportunities because of the domination of earlier established ethnic groups over the decision-making process.” Thus,” as Latino social roles increased, the concomitant skills [were] lacking…”\textsuperscript{476} The aim of the Latino Institute was gaining visibility and participation of Latinos in Chicago.

On September 18, 1975 Frank Seever submitted the Latino Institute Proposal to the Frederick E. Hummel and Ida H. Hummel Foundation. The Chicago Commons intervened on their behalf requesting a Hummel Foundation Award in the amount of $50,000 over of a two-year period. According to the Latino Institute, “the money was needed to assist in the final stage of establishing the Institute as a self-sustaining community development agency operated by and for the Chicago area population.” The proposal described the problems facing the Latino community and traced “the history of a unique joint effort that had begun in 1972 when the

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\item \textsuperscript{473} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}.
\item \textsuperscript{474} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}.
\item \textsuperscript{475} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}.
\item \textsuperscript{476} Latino Institute, \textit{Technical assistance program}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Chicago Commons agreed to help a group of concerned Latino Leaders… Chicago Common’s first priority was to assist the emerging Latino Institute to develop a responsible Board of Directors, and a core professional staff that would proceed to identify the priorities, develop specific program proposals and build a broad base of financial support.” Early in 1975, an office was established in the Chicago Loop at West Adam Street. In September, the Joint Task Force was renamed and became the Board of Directors of the Latino Institute.\footnote{Latino Institute, \textit{Introduction and Summary of the Hummel Proposal}, September 18, 1975, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.}

**Latino Institute and Chicago Commons in 1975**

Also in September 1975, the Chicago Commons published the Newsletter of Chicago Commons Association, which described a joint event for the Chicago Commons and the Latino Institute. It stated that, “many members of the Chicago Commons family had the opportunity to hear the story of the Latino Institute from its executive director, Maria Cerdá.”\footnote{The Newsletter of Chicago Commons Association, September 1975, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.} The article described the collaboration of Cerdá and Fidel Lopez, the Latino Board presidents, and explained the event included joint guest appearances and presentations similar to the past meeting of the Chicago Commons Association in September of 1974. On that occasion, “Maria Cerdá gave a presentation to the Latino Institute at the Auxiliary Institute in October at camp Reinberg.”\footnote{The Newsletter of Chicago Commons Association, September 1975, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.} In this meeting she talked about how “the Latino Institute’s story [was] important for both Chicago
Commons and the Latino Community of Chicago.”\textsuperscript{480} This collaboration dates back to the 1950s, when they began a working relationship with Latino neighborhoods of Chicago.

She recalled the initiative “Latino Strategies of the 1970s,” which brought the participation of more than three hundred Latinos. Cerdá argued, “members of the Latino communities continued to meet, and some who had not participated in the conference, had joined with those who had.” The end result of “the critical discussions of these meetings was the formation of a Task Force of Latino members of Chicago Commons Association, a task force that defined the needs and implemented ideas.” She mentioned that this task force “went through the difficult period of identifying problems and action alternatives.”\textsuperscript{481} The Chicago Commons staff provided time, resources, and moral support. They introduced the concept that the Latino ought to serve as an instrument of social change.

Cerdá acknowledged that after three years of dialogue and careful planning, the Latino Institute “was a firmly based reality, already actively meeting the important issues of the Latino community, and already providing leadership training to citizens within the Latino Community.” She stated that the “Latino Institute [was] in part possible because of the enabling assistance of Chicago Commons Association.” That was the basic premise of their collaboration; that is, the Chicago Commons helped in the foundation of the Institute but supported their programs throughout the years.

\textsuperscript{480} The Newsletter of Chicago Commons Association, September 1975, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{481} The Newsletter of Chicago Commons Association, September 1975, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Chicago Collaboration: Latino and Immigration Rights Activism

Since Lea Taylor became the director of the Chicago Commons, this settlement became an important component of social reform and immigration activism in the city. More than 100 people attended the memorial service for Lea Taylor, daughter of the Chicago Commons founder Graham Taylor, to pay their respects to a person who had been an “intimate and central part of the Chicago Commons life for more than 50 years.” Statements from the memorial service held on January 12, 1976 reflected on her work and remembered her character and life. Gerardo Ungaro for example, “talked of Taylor’s dedicated and astute professionalism in the field of social service.” Rose DeJulio spoke of her “important and understanding work with the various immigrants groups that have come and made their way under the help of the Chicago Commons.” Graham Taylor Jr. read a statement from Lea’s sister who was unable to attend due to illness… “The statement gave a sister’s view of a dedicated life and joy it brought to Lea.” Bill Bruckner, former executive director of the Commons recalled, the “warm, human anecdotes the staff viewed of working with Lea Taylor.” He noted of her personal qualities, such as “her warmth and simplicity, her strength and her flexibility, and her always quietly human approach to the work of Chicago Commons in serving the community.” Lea Taylor’s work was influential for social organizations like the IPL, as she developed local programs that helped reformers advocate for immigrants.482

Representatives of the settlement houses of Chicago also attended her funeral.

482 Lea Taylor, Memorial Service 1975, Commons Newsletter. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
For instance, “Dr. Arthur Hillman, formerly director of the Training Center of the National Federation of Settlements talked of Lea Taylors’s stature and contributions in developing the social service field into a thoroughly professional calling.” He noted Taylor’s many activities in providing leadership to such organizations as the Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood centers, the Welfare Council of Chicago and the Chicago Community Fund. “A fund that was instrumental in developing the Latino Institute of Chicago.” The collaboration survived Lea Taylor and united social reformers like Maria Cerdá with settlement groups, who presided over several boards and who helped achieved the Institute's main objectives.483

On July 15, 1976 a formal agreement between Chicago Commons and the Latino Institute was reached. It stated that, “Whereas, Chicago Commons Association, an Illinois non-for-profit corporation, was primarily interested in assisting efforts towards community improvement in the neediest neighborhoods in the City of Chicago through organization and development… and whereas, the Latino Institute, an Illinois not-for-profit cooperation was involved in various efforts at community improvement in the City of Chicago.”484 The Commons was aware that the success and failure of the Institute hinged on its ability to maintain a program of community improvement.485

The Institute continued publicizing and presenting alternatives to Latino community and development. “The Latino Institute, through an American Issues Forum Grant, and in collaboration with Latino community organizations, sponsored community forums that attracted

483 Lea Taylor, Memorial Service 1975, Commons Newsletter. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
484 Latino Institute, Funding 1-2. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
485 Latino Institute, Funding 1-2. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
over 600 persons. The forum dealt with topics such as, the Criminal Justice System; Latinos as a
Sub Culture within the System; Undocumented Persons; Latinos in Civil Service; The Values of
the Latino Women and their Roles in American Society; Unity Among Latino Groups; The
Means of Power; and, the Quest for Identity. A sixth forum was then planned for August
1976.\textsuperscript{486} The Latino Institute shared these issues and forums with the Chicago Commons and
MLEA.

They created programs like that of the Family Financial Education Program, which was
developed by Continental Bank and designed to provide consumer educational workshops in the
barrios for low-income Latino families. Continental Bank provided materials, such as workbooks
and leader’s manuals, which were translated into Spanish and were free of charge. This program
was offered in collaboration with two community based Latino organizations that were in the
process of recruiting participants. The Latino Institute staff provided trainers and speakers for
these workshops.\textsuperscript{487} Also, a consultant from the Research and Documentation Center was hired
for a five-month period from May to September 1976 to begin the development of a library
system to catalog and obtain materials. Funds were sought for this component, which served as a
credible information base for Latino organizations and individuals as well as non-Latino
agencies in need of a centralized information center on Latino programs, issues.\textsuperscript{488}

In addition to the three program components, the Latino Institute played an active and
important advocacy role in issues relating to bilingual education and community development.

\textsuperscript{486} Latino Institute, \textit{Forums Latino Institute Report}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{487} Latino Institute, \textit{Family Financial Education Program}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
\textsuperscript{488} Latino Institute, \textit{Research and Documentation}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
The executive Director made numerous presentations to groups, agencies, and government bodies explaining and defining bilingual educational and leadership development in the Latino community. The institute was used as a meeting place for many Latino organizations to meet and strategize for common goals. “The institute served as an important bridge—a link between the Latino communities and the broader community at large, providing opportunities for meeting and dialoguing between groups that heretofore did not communicate.”

The Institute borrowed this model of activism from the settlement model of the Chicago Commons.

On September 24, 1976 Frank Seever, an Executive of the Chicago Commons, wrote to Frank H. Woods, treasurer of the Wood Charitable Find Inc, that the Chicago Commons was pleased to submit a final report to the Wood Charitable Fund on the Latino Institute project. He thanked, this Fund for the opportunity of its participation. The Chicago Commons recognized that the Latino Institute was an independent agency, and “had received funding from the Community Fund of Chicago during the Fiscal Year of 1977 (125k).” They agreed on a two year commitment made by the Wood Charitable Trust that “included a grant of 15,000 for Fiscal year 1977.” The Chicago commons requested that this second year grant be made directly to the Latino Institute since it had achieved independent status and was a duly incorporated non-for-profit organization in the State of Illinois, having received its IRS designation as a Tax-exempt Corporation. Seever appreciated the help the Wood Charitable Fund provided in helping the Chicago Commons Association to establish the Chicago Institute.

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489 Latino Institute, The Executive Director. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
490 Chicago Commons in Latino Institute 13. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
Latino Institute members also aimed to publicize the Institute’s agenda with the purpose of gathering support. The Latino Institute staff “made repeated appearances on both Spanish speaking and non-Spanish media and participated with parents and community members,” developing and issuing press releases to the editors. Together, they advocated for the education equality of Latinos and African Americans.\textsuperscript{491} The Institute achieved a broad and local collaboration with the multiple institutions and business in the Latino communities in Chicago. They even helped parents “in preparation of testimony before legislative and policy making bodies.”\textsuperscript{492} This showed that the activists of the Latino Institute were committed to a wider reform project of Latino rights.

The members helped in the city’s desegregation efforts, primarily in the education system. At the community level, the board of trustee members “acted as resources and speakers to community organizations.”\textsuperscript{493} This collaboration allowed the Institute to secure their involvement in creating change. In 1976, the Institute was a resource for the Office of Civil Rights and Illinois Office of Education. They “filed an amicus curiae brief in the case of noncompliance of the Chicago Board of Education v Office of Civil Rights.”\textsuperscript{494} In collaboration with other Latino organizations, the Latino Institute representatives met with Conrad Harper, an appointed negotiator in the case. In that meeting with Harper, they expressed concerns and responded to the desegregation plan that the Chicago Board of Education was recommending in

\textsuperscript{491} Latino Institute, \textit{Statement of Purpose}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
\textsuperscript{492} Latino Institute, \textit{Statement of Purpose}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
\textsuperscript{493} \textit{Chicago Board of Education v Office of Civil Rights}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago
\textsuperscript{494} \textit{Chicago Board of Education v Office of Civil Rights}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
1976. Harper “requested assistance from this group in formulating portions of the response of Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.” The Institute’s position was to secure and expand bilingual education for bilingual and bicultural Latino and immigrant children.

Records and evidence showed that the Latino Institute collaborated on many desegregation fronts in the city. They initiated and sponsored the Latino Desegregation Committee to plan the involvement of the Latino community-at-large in the desegregation efforts. The committee included representatives from Latino organizations, as well as business, media, professional organizations and the parent community.

The Latino Institute served as a technical assistance resource to the Latino member Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) in the drafting of a position paper on Latino perspectives and concerns regarding desegregation in the city school system. In addition, the institute continued working on “parent involvement in bilingual and bicultural education,” as they aimed to “ensure sound implementation” of the various programs in the Chicago Public Schools system, as “negotiated in the plan for the implementation of the provisions of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” which incorporated a component for improving parent involvement.

**Immigration Collaboration during the 1970s**

During the late 1970s, activists from the MLEA, Latino Institute and Illinois Migrant Council worked on several fronts. They worked on local level programs and collaborated on

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495 *Chicago Board of Education v Office of Civil Rights.* Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.

496 Latino Institute, *Statement of Purpose Mission.* Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.

497 On this coalition movement: [MLEA, Latino Institute, Spanish Speaking People Study Commission, and Illinois Migrant Council]
community issues. The MLEA had collaborated with the Latino Institute in 1978 and with the Illinois Migrant Council in 1979. MLEA, which was created to meet the rapidly growing needs of Latina women in Chicago, by the late 1970s was run “by a Board of community residents,” a staff of six women and numerous dedicated reformers. In 1977, MLEA had recruited and trained people in the community to be temporary foster parents. They claimed, “The problem of ‘runaway girls’ [or foster kids] was growing in their communities,” for which they responded by creating a Temporary Housing Project. They stated, “we have been successful reuniting the majority of ‘runaway girls’ with their families, but that there [was] still a great need for temporary foster homes.” 498 The MLEA activists operated the center as a settlement house, providing housing, training and employing the most disadvantageous ones.

On April 5, 1977, Fidel López, president of the Latino Institute, proposed amending Article IV, sections 1 and 3 of this group’s By-Laws. These amendments aimed to increase the numbers of members serving on the board from eleven to twenty-one. López explained that the Community Policy Boards were “in the process of being formed for the Technical Assistance and Leadership Training components.” 499 He stated that, “the technical assistance and training directors recommended that the Board amend sections 1 and 3 permitting a larger number of members in the Community Policy Board.” 500 The rationale for such changes was to have more representation from numerous Latino organizations and communities in the city. 501

498 MLEA Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
499 Latino Institute, Fidel López April 5, 1977. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
500 Latino Institute, Fidel López April 5, 1977. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
501 Latino Institute, Fidel López April 5, 1977. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Activists from the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) and The Latino Institute met at the Migrant Conference on June 15, 1978. Trainers Ruth Vasquez and Julio Noboa organized this conference with the objective of transmitting the importance and advantages of Latino parental involvement in cooperation with school officials. They aimed to provide participants with clarification as to the role and function of the Parent Advisory Council. In addition, they sought to provide participants of the conference with “a brief overview of the Leadership Training Program” as well as to communicate the experiences and strategies used to assist the development of a Parent Advisory Council program. 502 The Latino Institute introduced the Migrant Conference and welcomed all presenters and facilitators. Each group had a facilitator that provided instruction and allowed the newly arrived participants to introduce themselves, so they could get oriented on the main goals. The organizers of this conference noted that “several parents and administrators demonstrated interest in maintaining contact with the Institute for future information and training.”503 Facilitators felt that, in general the aims of the session were fulfilled. However, they also felt that “the content, especially the presentation of strategies, could have been more extensive.”504 By joining forces, the activists from the IMC and the Latino Institute learned how to expand their efforts and to organize migration conferences.

They also recognized that some of the problems that affected the Migration Conference sessions were the numerous late arrivals of participants, which interrupted the progression of the

sub group discussions. They also felt that content could have been more relevant “had the conference organizers shared their knowledge about their experiences and efforts migrant education administrators had made toward parents participation.” In terms of the logistics and equipment, facilitators felt that the rooms were unorganized and that some “thick pillars were obstacles to the implementation of the lesson plan.” Besides these technical problems, the conference had positive results. First, parents participated fully and responded well to the session; facilitators were convinced that parents benefitted completely from the session. Second, “several parents and administrators requested future meetings and [more] resources form [the Council].” Third, “although some administrators were impatient during the first part of the session, they were more satisfied with the latter part,” when the facilitators shared their knowledge with them. Lastly, parents found the handouts from the Migrant Conference to be helpful, and “for the most part, the evaluations sheets had very favorable comments.” With some setbacks, the members of Latino Institute and Latino Migrant council made great gains in establishing effective relationships in areas of immigration social advocacy.

The Latino Institute, SSPC, and the Illinois Migrant Council collaborated again in 1978 and 1979, exploring Illinois State legislation on new immigration legislation proposals. According to a Chicago Sun Times article from Tuesday March 13, 1979, The “New Illegal Alien Guideline,” this new legislation proposed changes to immigration statutes responding to

505 Latino Institute, Migrant Conference June 15, 1978. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
506 Latino Institute, Migrant Conference June 15, 1978. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
President Carter’s call for immigration reform. Organizations, like The Congress of La Raza, the SSPC and the Latino Institute from Illinois discussed how they could examine the impact of such changes upon Latino communities.

Arturo Zendejas from the Spanish Speaking People Study Commission sent a memo to the Latino Institute staff on May 2, 1979 regarding current Illinois state legislation under consideration during that year. The Study Commission “via Ada S. McKinley” submitted to the Latino office a “brief synopsis of legislation which most definitely affects or that will affect the Latino Community.” 509 The SSPSC and Ada McKinley suggested that the Institute contact their respective Senator and/or Representative to share their views on the legislation attached on the memo, like H.B 677. The memo had attached a list of bills that were in the processes of being introduced in the House and for which they alerted the Latino Institute to act accordingly.

In a brief memo of the Latino Institute, several organizations redacted a coalition statement in opposition of Senate Bill 1252. The proposed statute, S.B.1252, “required every Illinois resident to prove United States citizenship or lawful residency in the United States as a prerequisite for obtaining or continuing employment.” They expressed that the bill also established penalties for employers, who hired individuals in violation of the law.510 The community, social service, religious and labor organizations, which included the Latino Institute, strongly opposed this legislation because the statute would first, unnecessarily “burden employers with interpreting and administering the complex immigration and nationalities laws.”

509 Latino Institute, Spanish Speaking People Study Commission, May 2, 1979. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
510 Latino Institute, Immigration Policy. Coalition statement in opposition of Senate Bill 1252: (S.B. 1252 was first proposed on October 5, 1978). Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Second, this legislation could “lead to the discriminatory denial of employment to the United States citizens and aliens lawfully residing in the United States.” Third, S.B.1252 “interfered with the federal government’s constitutional responsibility with respect to immigration and nationality.”\(^ {511}\) Thus, this proposal severely challenged the work activists from IMC, MLEA and the Latino Institute were fighting for.

For the National Council of La Raza and other Illinois coalition organizations, like the Latino Institute, “such legislation [was] especially inappropriate in view of the recent passage in Congress of legislation established a Select Commission to study immigration laws and to propose necessary reforms.” The proposals included “to grant lawful status to undocumented aliens with substantial attachments to the United States”\(^ {512}\) The Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy was set forth by the Carter Administration. According to the statement opposing to S.B 1252, the “establishment of this Select Commission highlighted that more information was needed before passage of broadly restrictive legislation with inevitably discriminatory consequences.”… The Labor and Commerce committees of the Illinois House of Representatives recognized the need for further information on this issue. Consequently, the Committee refused to pass H.B. 181 and H.B. 259, two bills parallel to S.B. 1252, and assigned them to a subcommittee for further study.\(^ {513}\) Immigration activists aimed to understand if this new policy would expand immigration restrictions.

As a result, the National Council of La Raza distributed a press release in the Latino Institute community to “Alert to Action.” Michael Cortez, vice president for the research,

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\(^ {511}\) Latino Institute, \textit{Immigration Policy}. Coalition statement in opposition of Senate Bill 1252.

\(^ {512}\) Latino Institute, \textit{Coalition statement in opposition of Senate Bill 1252}.

\(^ {513}\) Latino Institute, \textit{Coalition statement in opposition of Senate Bill 1252}. 
advocacy and legislation department of La Raza, alerted the Latino Institute on November 5, 1979 of the formation of a Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy with a mandate under public law 95-412 or S.B 1252. They stated, “the Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy provided policy recommendation to the President and Congress by 1980.”

This comprehensive undertaking was the “first assessment of this magnitude at the White House and Congressional levels of U.S immigration policies and laws.” The commission was “required to recommend on and formulate the nation’s future immigration and refugee polices.” The commission addressed several board issues affecting the United States such as “What was the relationship of immigration and refugee policy to: economic growth, defense capabilities, foreign policy leadership, traditional values such as patriotism, family unity, and work ethics, health and welfare, existing social programs, law enforcement, and scientific, civil, cultural and political life.” Some of these issues reflected the social advocacy platforms that groups like the Latino Institute, the Chicago Commons, and the MLEA had worked on since the late 1960s, especially in regard to immigrants’ rights.

Immigration activists noted, “Regional hearings [were] scheduled throughout the country.” They scheduled a hearing in Chicago in April 1980 to be chaired by Illinois Representatives Robert McClory. La Raza was committed to publicize the meetings. “While they [felt] this meeting was important, they recognized that the Commission’s research staff was also at work formulating policy option papers. Therefore, the influence of the [immigration coalition groups] must be felt.”

“Written comments and position papers were being accepted

presently by the commission.” These coalition organizations collaborated on Latino social advocacy and immigrant rights activism.

La Raza urged immigration activists to participate in this policy formulating process. They also encouraged the general public to “share their comments or experiences either directly or indirectly,” on the following specific Latino issues: temporary worker programs, sanctions against employers who hire undocumented aliens; amnesty provisions; increasing immigration quotas for western countries; the rights of undocumented workers to join unions; the rights of undocumented aliens to human, employment, and educational services; constitutional and human rights of undocumented aliens; international economic development; border enforcement; the use of local law enforcement officials by INS to enforce immigration laws; enforcement of current laws to protect workers. Migration activists from La Raza focused on all these topics, arguing that participation of Latinos was critical. Migration activists understood that the commission’s plans were of “vital importance” to all of the Latino community.

Moreover, the Latino Institute continued working to secure bilingual education in Illinois; yet that fight generated conflict with the Chicago public schools desegregation plans in 1979. The Latino Institute contended that Latino communities were left out of the legislation’s public school reforms. For example, Mario Aranda, calling out what they considered “the federal government’s callous disregard” of Latino views on school desegregation, and of leaders of Chicago Hispanic community, charged the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the Department of

Health, Education, and Welfare, for not listening to the claim of the Latino community “in preparing its feasibility study for the desegregation of Chicago public schools.”\textsuperscript{520} Aranda argued, “the government’s proposal largely concerns black and white racial balance, ignoring Latino interests and posing a threat to such gains as bilingual education programs and increased parental involvement in predominantly Latino schools.”\textsuperscript{521} Aranda’s position was that a plan that excludes Latino perspectives would not have Latino organizations’ support. According to citywide enrollment, this would mean not participating in school busing which consisted of approximately 115,000 Latino students. They believed that Latinos accounted for the 16.1% of total school enrollment.\textsuperscript{522}

Carmen Velázquez from the Chicago Board of Education claimed the “government broke a promise made at an August 6 meeting to include Latinos’ viewpoints before drawing up the proposal. In their statement, Latino leaders said civil rights provisions in the areas of special education, bilingual education, and teacher assignments were not addressed in the government’s study, making it incomplete and impossible for them to support. Another panel member, Mary Gonzalez, director of race relations for Ada S. McKinley Community Services, expressed concern that the government’s proposal would bus “disproportionate numbers of Latino students out of their neighborhoods to create a buffer zone between white and blacks.”\textsuperscript{523} These Latino activists had clearly stated that they had to protect the rights of Latinos and immigrants to have bilingual education in the public school system. They wanted to make sure those rights were

\textsuperscript{520} Latino Institute, \textit{Immigration Policy. Chicago Tribune} September 2, 1979, “Latinos Say Busing Plan Disregard their Needs.”
\textsuperscript{521} Chicago Tribune September 2, 1979, “Latinos Say Busing Plan Disregard their Needs.”
\textsuperscript{522} Chicago Tribune September 2, 1979, “Latinos Say Busing Plan Disregard their Needs.”
\textsuperscript{523} Chicago Tribune September 2, 1979, “Latinos Say Busing Plan Disregard their Needs.”
included in city and statewide proposals. They claimed that the Illinois state legislators had to sort out with local and community organizations, because since 1960 they had fought to secure Latino rights as in immigration state services and programs.

**Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed the histories of local Latino activists in Chicago during the late 1960s and 1970s. The collaboration between Latino organizations, like the Latino Institute and the Chicago Commons, began after the campaigns of “We are Here” and “Latino Strategies of 1970s”. The Latino Institute used a model of social advocacy that combined community development and training and educational resources. The Institute became a facilitator of services in areas such as bilingual education and community centers. They helped to strengthen immigration activism, through collaborations with the Chicago Commons, Latino Institute, and Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA), and provided a variety of effective programs for Latino immigrants. Specifically, the Chicago Commons worked on issues of Chicago social reform, desegregation, and racial integration programs, but also helped emerging Latino organizations access funding opportunities. During the 1970s, the Latino Institute centered on state and federal immigration legislation and bilingual education, key issues for immigrant rights. MLEA worked on immigration advocacy, housing programs for Latinas and immigrant women in abject poverty, employment training, job development, bilingual and bicultural education, women’s health services, and community workshops.

Edward Garcia, president of the Latino Institute, reaffirmed the Latino Institute’s mission “to assert, strengthen and help the Latino community of Chicago in its struggle for self-
development, self-determination and effective unified participation…”524 The skills developed through the Institute’s programs also permitted participants “to become involved in other issues in the broader community.”525 In fact, the members served on several boards and councils throughout the city. The Institute “received and honored numerous requests to provide teacher in-service,” that aimed to promote better understanding of the need for parent and teacher collaboration in Latino communities. 526

The members of the Institute gained significance and importance as they collaborated at several levels: local and community. The staff members of the Latino Institute had served on national, state, and local boards, Committees, and councils such as, the State Wide Council on Bilingual Education (for the Illinois Office of Education; the City-Wide Advisory Council) to develop a desegregation plan for the Chicago Board of Education; Illinois Employment and Training Council. Between 1974 and 1979, the Latino Institute initiated and sponsored meetings of the Latino Desegregation Committee “to plan the involvement of the Latino community at large in the desegregation efforts” and acted as a referral agency to both Latino and non-Latinos.527

As great reformer of immigrant rights and Latino issues, Cerdá helped to expand opportunities for Chicago’s Latino communities. During her tenure at the Latino Institute, she made presentations on parent and community involvement at the American Anthropological Association Convention from 1966 to 1977 and at the International Bilingual and Bicultural

524 Edward Garcia, “President’s letter during the 10 year anniversary of the Institute 1984,” Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
525 Latino Institute, Statement of Purpose. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
526 Latino Institute, Statement of Purpose. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
527 Latino Institute, Statement of Purpose. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Conference in Chicago (1975), in San Antonio (1976), and New Orleans (1977). In addition, she participated in statewide multilingual education conferences in 1976 and in 1977 and in the National Institute of Education Conference on Desegregation and Education Concerns of the Hispanic Community in Washington, D.C in June 1977. Lastly, Cerdá also spoke with groups concerned with education issues in the Midwest (University of Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio) and local universities (University of Chicago, Northwestern, Loyola, DePaul, Roosevelt, and the National College of Education).\textsuperscript{528}

In 1984, the Latino Institute commemorated a decade of commitment to the “social, economic, and human progress of Chicago Hispanic Communities.” They claimed that the Latino Institute, “held to its promise that lasting progress [was] won, not just through catharsis, but through the transformation of frustration into unity, consensus, and clarity of purpose.”\textsuperscript{529} For this organization, the first ten years represented a great achievement. They described, “[time] gave each of us hope that a new century of self-determination and social equity for Latinos may be at hand.” And focusing on the future, they argued “when that century truly begins, our mission of the Latino Institute will be fulfilled”\textsuperscript{530} Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the work of the Latino Institute, along with the Chicago Commons and Mujeres Latinas, was meaningful for the development of Latino immigrants activism in Chicago.

\textsuperscript{528} Maria B. Cerdá Records. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{529} Latino Institute, \textit{The First 10 years}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
\textsuperscript{530} Latino Institute, \textit{The First 10 years}. Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Chicago.
Conclusion

Local and State Immigration Activism

The work and battles of immigrant rights organizations persist today. Immigrant organizations in Illinois have remained involved, attending to the social needs and political grievances of Latino immigrant communities, as they are still experiencing exclusion and inequality. Immigrant activists continue facilitating services to immigrants and refugees, thus fighting for their rights either locally or at the community level. I suggest Latino social organizations developed migration politics of inclusion through local level alliances, state level reforms and community building programs. The collaboration of settlement reformers and state level reformers until the 1970s helped to expand immigration advocacy on various issues, such as fair employment, better housing and work conditions, and bilingual educations programs, and prison reform.

The central argument of this project is that Latino activists and social reformers shared an agenda in favor of Latino immigrants’ inclusion and rights, which consisted of making visible their contribution as Chicago’s workers and as community members. I argue that social reformers and immigrant rights activists crafted a civic front that incorporated different reform agendas, at both local and state levels, focusing on urban, social, and community reforms. The city’s Latina/o and social reformers developed a diverse transformative agenda that aimed to improve the social conditions of immigrants in Chicago.
My objective was to demonstrate that settlements, such as the Immigrant Protective League (IPL) and Northwestern University Settlement’s (NUS) battles for the inclusion of immigrants in the workforce differed from assimilation and Americanization programs of settlement houses, which scholars argue were limited in scope and specifically concerned with “integrating the immigrant into American society.”531 Conversely, my study contends that these settlement groups differed from previous reformers in Chicago since they departed from goals of assimilation and advocated instead for immigrant inclusion, showing support for agricultural workers facing housing evictions, lack of workplace compensation, and poor housing conditions.532 Immigrant rights activism also became a central theme of these organizations as reformers increasingly supported the incorporation of immigrant issues, such as unemployment and housing, into state-level social reform. Latino migration activists did not work independently from the settlement houses and local and state reformers.

The IPL, for example, in 1980 merged with the Traveler Aid Society and in 1995 became the Heartland Alliance for Human Rights and Human Needs. The activism of the Heartland Alliance continues to embody the same goals of inclusion of the settlement workers who created this organization. Local level alliances of Latino community organizations with social reformers


of long-term settlement institutions like the Chicago Common and Association House allowed immigrant rights activism in Chicago to remain relevant and active. Other groups like the Mujeres Latina en Acción (MLEA) and Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) stayed involved in state-level legislation contributing to the advancement of rights for immigrant workers and undocumented immigrants.

Currently, immigrant rights activists are pressing Illinois state legislators to pass statewide sanctuary laws, expanding the sanctuary policies the city of Chicago already has in place to protect immigrants. Civic organizations and churches that provide shelter to refugees and undocumented immigrants facing federal deportation orders need, and could benefit from, such legislation. However, Illinois anti-immigrant groups and conservative organizations keep contesting immigrant rights legislation that supports refugee and sanctuary efforts. Legislation, such as the S.B. 22 in Illinois, has faced strong opposition from citizens’ groups that claim that these protections for immigrants hurt their economic prospects.\(^{533}\) Despite this opposition, reformers from the Heartland Alliance and the MLEA, among many other local groups, keep advocating for state level immigration legislation that could potentially secure education and workers’ rights for all immigrants in the state. Immigration activists, cautious of a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiments, which is evident among public officials who aim to curtail illegal immigration in Illinois, turn to direct local solutions and state level efforts.

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With this study I charted the different levels of activism within a heterogeneous group of Chicago social reformers to explain how immigrant rights’ activism changed over time. Although their claims and programs are quite different, they share reform strategies. The migration politics of the Heartland Alliance and the MLEA parallel the work of the Immigrant Protective League, which consisted of challenging the 1920s and 1930s immigration restrictions and quotas. The activism of these immigrant reformers is also comparable to the work of the Illinois Migrant Council as they both contested unfair employment policies for agricultural workers during the 1960s and 1970s. Present day organizations, like the Heartland Alliance and the ICIRR are the products of the work of early immigrant rights movements, and the city and state level social reformers from the 1930s to 1970s that I discussed in this study.

I evaluated a combination of Latino civic engagements that occurred after the 1930s with the arrival of Mexican Americans and immigrants in the Midwest to work as industrial and agricultural workers. The organizations that began working with immigrants in Chicago focused on individual issues, specific to the need of workers and refugees. Similar to the other Latino social organizations in the Southwest and Southern California such as LULAC and El Congreso, Chicago immigration reformers started working on local problems. They worked to find solutions with the help of community and neighborhood-based volunteer groups. In Chicago, local social reformers from settlement houses, such as the Association Houses and Northwestern University Settlement, thrived in helping new Latino residents and workers access the services they needed. Overtime, their services, programs, and reform objectives shifted towards broader
themes, which helped to build multi-level alliances that transformed the social and political landscape for immigrants in the state.

These activists aimed to contest state and local policies in Illinois; their efforts became part of the political history of the state. Historians have shown how Latino migrations in urban centers were sources of great exclusion, and that new immigrants lacked opportunities and services in the city. Still, during the 20th century Chicago, Illinois was a favorite destination for immigrants seeking industrial and agricultural jobs in Midwest farms. Immigrant activists worked to fix the imbalance in state services for immigrants and went beyond providing work contracts and residency. Among other things, they helped to include Latino issues and workplace protection for agricultural workers into the 1970 state legislation and constitution.

During the 1930s and the period following the Second World War, immigrant labor was in demand. Although the U.S. government had passed restrictive legislation in the 1920s, it also expanded temporary labor contracts through the Emergency Farm Labor Act in 1942 called the Bracero program (a guest worker program that terminated in 1964). In Illinois during the 1960s and 1970s, as part of governmental incentives, the state received large groups of agricultural workers that set up residence outside of the city limits and closer to farm camps. The state and local reformers of the Spanish Speaking People Commission and Migrant Children Commission soon realized that they needed to work to pass legislation to transform the conditions of labor camps and of the housing opportunities for agricultural workers. It was first necessary to expose the deplorable conditions inside the migrant camps and to secure legislation favorable to those agricultural workers and their families. Although their goals were truly transformative, the
results were very specific, work related regulations that secured better working conditions and established additional housing provisions.

Because immigration activism did not only exclusively develop in urban centers but also in Illinois counties and Chicago suburbs, long time organizations like the IPL and the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) had started and centered their headquarters and main settlements outside the city limits. In the case of the IPL, their work focused on providing individual services to immigrant workers and families to help them access housing and social needs in the city. These organizations eventually formed alliances among the settlement workers and state agencies, becoming a crucial liaison of professional reformers that continued the work of expanding the rights of immigrant workers. Thus, even though this is not an entirely urban history, I intertwined the grievances of immigrant workers and families in the urban areas with the battles of agricultural workers outside the city limits.

From the 1930s and 1970s, settlement activism experienced several transformations. In Chicago, immigrant reformers who worked in tenement houses and settlement houses strived to protect immigrants from restrictive laws and stricter naturalization requirements after the Second World War by helping them gather documentation in their countries of origin that would be useful for later residency application. Settlement houses like NUS helped the surrounding communities and neighborhoods with work increasingly focused on Latino immigrant families. In the postwar era, the settlement activism formed out of largely voluntary associations that distributed individual aid, such as housing, winter relief, and food baskets, transformed into a
immigration advocacy that helped to create refugee and immigration centers in the city and expand opportunities and rights for immigrant workers in the state.

Organizations like the IPL also served as intermediaries between employment agencies and local and state workers who needed their input on how to combat city’s “immigration problems.” In Chicago, not only did the IPL and NUS work together but also organizations, such as the Association House, the Chicago Commons, and the Federation of Settlements Houses developed immigration and social advocacy, using a durable model that intertwined labor, housing and social issues to their goals.

In the United States the pattern has been to “solve or fix” immigration at the national level either through federal reform or legislation; however, we learn little about the immigration activists who worked to secure and expand individual services and rights at local and state level. Immigration reformers and settlement houses have been traditionally analyzed in relation to naturalization and americanization programs, and I argue they did much more than that. My study suggests that their activism integrated a more or less defined social advocacy combining community-based organizations and local and state groups. Although we could analyze immigration activism as other social historians have, a social movement shaping civic and trade union organizing and claiming changes in electoral politics and voting rights, my work contends that also, through state and local efforts, we can see how immigration reformers battled for Latino inclusion in Illinois institutions and made broader social demands for immigrants.534

534 Immigrant Protective League Collection and Records. Special Collection and Archives University of Illinois Chicago
I view the activism that developed in Chicago in a similar light as other organizations that emerged in big industrial centers like New York and Michigan, which became the favorite destinations for immigrant workers in the United States. But we rarely see those city stories intertwined with the ones developing outside urban centers, or how those demands were carried out. My work does precisely that. I wanted to understand the immigration activism of social settlements and what I discovered was that social reformers, in particular women activists, worked in association with state legislators and reformers. That was the case with the IPL reformers. Edith Abbott and Adena S. Rich studied and explored legislation favorable or unfavorable for the immigrants of the state. Similar was the case of the Illinois Migrant Council, which I knew had worked in conjunction with Southwest labor unions and Southern California agricultural organizers, but only through my archival work did I come to understand how these activists had also shifted outside the city limits.

These groups were fighting for state-level equality in the workplace and for agricultural and temporary employment. In fact, organizations in Springfield, such as SSPC and ICMC, had local groups working in the city in collaboration with Chicago local and community-based organizations, like the Latino Institute and Mujeres Latinas en Acción (MLEA). All together, the organizations and social reformers included in this study developed as a transformative and heterogeneous group of immigration activists.

I stressed the role of state level activists and state organizations that worked on behalf of Latino immigrants in Illinois, such as SSPC, IMC, and ICMC during the 1960s and 1970s. They worked on what could be considered long-established Latino battles for equality, as other
minorities contesting barriers in the United States did. State activism aimed to expand equality for Latinos, including fair and sanitary housing, fair employment practices, and opportunities for defense and agricultural workers. Like other Latino advocacy groups, the immigration workers I examined in this project worked on stressing the education rights and on expanding bilingual education in schools and the Illinois prison system. While other historians have studied Latino activism emphasizing the legal battles, I believe that, in Chicago, a diverse infrastructure of social settlement workers allowed for state reformers to integrate social, housing and education rights for Latinos and other immigrant communities.

Community level social organizations like the Latino Institute and MLEA helped us to understand the emergence of numerous individual immigrant rights groups in the United States in the postwar era, including bicultural and bilingual activists, as well as women and feminist immigrant organizations in the city. During the 1970s, immigrant workers were still quite dispersed from each other and separated by nationalities. Workplace integration within the city’s urban industrial centers allowed for a growing awareness of the common grievances within a diverse sector of immigration activists dealing with immigration issues: labor, employment, housing, and rights. Immigration activism in other U.S. cities, like Miami, New York and Los Angeles also experienced some growth along the same lines, expanding education and workers’ rights for immigrant Latino communities. They carried out individual and collective efforts that showcased Latino immigrants’ inequities. Latino activists helped to expand immigrant rights by not only asserting citizenship and naturalization rights through the state and federal courts, but also byconcerting local and state alliances.
Not only in Chicago but also in other regions like New York, immigrant rights activists changed Latino/a stories on a national level. The strategies of Chicago immigrant activists, who fought for immigrant rights in the postwar era in many ways reflect the work of community activists in New York City. As the literature on New York’s Latino migration has shown, during the postwar era Latino communities and immigration activists were already working on issues such as immigrants’ abject poverty, unfair housing and addressing concerns of migrant workers and their families. For example in the New York neighborhood of Washington Heights, local and state groups’ strategies aimed at addressing the social and living conditions of Dominican immigrants workers and at stopping anti-immigrant violence. These common themes between Chicago and New York activists show that immigrant groups had diverse migration trajectories and shared interests. My study also established new distinctions between the goal of immigrants’ organizations in Illinois, who worked primarily in the defense, steel, and railroad and agricultural industries, and those of organizations fighting for agricultural workers in the Southwest and Southern California.

In the case of Illinois, Latino immigration activism developed with the help of state and local actors working within the platform of the settlement workers. Settlement houses and neighborhood associations, such as the IPL, the Chicago Commons and the Association House,

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were pioneers of immigration advocacy in Chicago post 1945, as settlement houses transitioned into more defined immigration advocates of local and state reformers.

The early settlement activists, who I evaluated in this study, took the first steps for a larger sanctuary movement for exiles and refugee immigrants when they began helping displaced immigrants after the Second World War. Since then, that movement expanded to support refugees’ rights. Chicago organizations, such as the Travelers Aid Society, or Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, and the Latino Institute worked on family reunification and deportation cases and on providing housing and temporary employment and training to those in immediate need.

The Travelers Aid Society developed programs and offered resources to immigrants, such as medical services, education training, and employment counseling. The alliances they formed in Chicago played an important role in the collaboration of immigrants, lawyers, and immigrant rights activists who worked with communities facing immigrant displacement. During the 1970s to the 1980s, the IPL merged with the Travelers Aid Society, focusing on offering legal protections and economic opportunities for immigrants.537 This organization’s history served as example of the continued need for services for refugee and immigrant families as they offered support for the growing immigrant population living in abject poverty in the city and provided aid for undocumented workers.

Social reformers from immigration organizations, such as the IPL, NUS, SSPC, ICMC, Latino Institute, and the Heartland Alliance, advocated for economic and social equality for

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537 IPL and Traveler Aid Society Collections in University of Illinois Special Collections and Archives.
Chicago’s Latino immigrants, and although they shared similar reform agendas they worked at different levels: local, state, and community. First, local reformers like the IPL and NUS contested immigration restrictions and helped displaced persons beginning in the postwar era. Second, state level reformers like the SSPC, ICMC supported legislation in favor of immigrant workers and families. Third, community level groups, such as the Latino Institute and Heartland Alliance, aimed to empower Latino communities and fought for immigrant rights. In this project, I intended to explain why the history of social reform in Chicago changed in the postwar era, and I analyzed how local, state, and community reformers developed activism with Latino/a immigrants groups in Chicago.

Furthermore, I aimed to analyze settlement houses beyond the traditional emphasis on naturalization programs and focused more on social advocacy programs for immigrants. Thus, I moved from the wartime period to the postwar era to underscore the growth of local and state efforts in Chicago. I also aimed to emphasize immigration activism outside of the city limits and suburbs. I analyzed the immigration activism that developed in Latino communities and neighborhoods in association with Chicago’s settlement groups and sanctuary reformers, which had continued with intermittent state and local support.

Lastly, I examined local, state, and community efforts that together explain how immigrant rights activism in Chicago changed over time. I explored early immigration reform within the settlement movement during the 1930s and early 1940s by investigating case studies of Chicago local reformers. The main objective was to understand how the concern of settlement groups over immigrant communities expanded locally and independently from naturalization
efforts. I analyzed how reformers incorporated immigration inclusion and labor issues into their state level platforms from mid 1940s to late 1960s, and I demonstrated that reformers of the settlement houses transitioned in the postwar era into immigration and state reformers. Ultimately, I examined the continuity of strategies and efforts of social reform movements among Latino immigrant rights groups in Illinois, which combined social justice initiatives and immigrant rights activism, during the 1960s and the late 1970s. Immigrant rights activism helped to expand social equality for Chicago’s Latina/o immigrants in the twentieth century.
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