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## A WORKING PAPER

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# Promise Arizona: Building Immigrant Political Power

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The 2012 re-election of President Barack Obama yielded unprecedented turnout among Latino voters. Nationally, Latinos voted in record numbers and chose President Obama over Republican candidate, Mitt Romney by 44 percentage points.<sup>1</sup> The power and organization of grassroots community, labor, and faith groups across the nation was a critical ingredient in this success. This contribution was recognized when President Obama invited labor and civic leaders to the White House on November 13, 2012 to discuss strategies for moving the economy forward in his next administration.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, in his first press conference following the election, the President emphasized his desire to pass comprehensive immigration reform shortly after his inauguration in 2013.<sup>3</sup> As the nation prepares for President Obama's second term, and as we seek to understand the impact of Latino voter turnout, it is necessary to evaluate what circumstances led to this moment and what is needed to achieve comprehensive immigration reform.

This case study investigates the history and accomplishments of one organization that is making considerable strides in advancing the values and political interests of the Latino community. Beginning in 2010, Promise Arizona (PAZ) and Promise Arizona in Action (PAZ en Acción) work to empower Latinos and the immigrant community to flex their civic muscle through community organizing and political action. This case study provides a snapshot of the organization's formation, growth, and organizing initiatives and explores what strategies have been central to its success. It is one model of how grassroots organizing can contribute to achieving immigration rights.

## Context

Arizona's political landscape is changing in dramatic ways. The last three election cycles showed ever-increasing Latino participation as a greater share of Arizona's electorate. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Arizona has the fifth largest Hispanic eligible voter population in the nation (824,000).<sup>4</sup> Latino Decisions reports that registered Latinos comprise between 18 and 20 percent of Arizona's electorate.<sup>5</sup> More Latinos are eligible to vote today than in 2008, especially Arizona's growing Latino youth population with a median age of 25. There is greater population growth among Arizona's Latinos than non-Hispanic whites, which also will increase the share of the electorate who are Latino.<sup>6</sup> A report by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University found that by 2030 Latinos will comprise 25 percent of the electorate with the most significant growth among young people (who are predominantly citizens) and with a trend towards independent and Democratic party affiliation.<sup>7</sup> The authors argue that several factors account for the increase in Latino participation including unprecedented voter registrations among Latinos, a growing trend towards vote-by-mail, and the electoral victories of Barack Obama, Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton, and Phoenix Councilmember Daniel Valenzuela.<sup>8</sup>

These changing electoral dynamics in Arizona, the passage of SB1070, and the exposure of Sheriff Joe Arpaio's reprehensible and discriminatory practices catapulted Arizona to the national spotlight. Activists have worked tirelessly to organize a strategic



response to the current political climate, amidst pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment and building on the momentum of a galvanized community. The leaders of Promise Arizona and its partner organizations have seeded a new movement. It is activated by a vision for Arizona's future in which all people are able to thrive with dignity, respect, and human rights and it is rooted in collective action: vigils, marches, rallies, voter registration drives, electoral campaigns, and policy advocacy.

## ■ Organizational Formation

Promise Arizona (PAZ) has its early roots in the *Reform Immigration for America* campaign and the national organizing movement for comprehensive immigration reform. PAZ was formed in 2010 when a dedicated group of community leaders, led by long-time community organizer Petra Falcon, organized to oppose SB1070. As Falcon recalls, “we began under a tree,” during what would be a 103-day vigil at the state capitol protesting Arizona's new anti-immigrant legislation. PAZ is a member organization that aims to recruit, train, and develop leaders for political action that will improve the lives of immigrants and their families. It has become a vehicle by which leaders, especially young people, are trained for civic participation. In partnership with the Center for Community Change and the New Organizing Institute, PAZ works to build and strengthen Arizona's organizing infrastructure for the immigrant rights movement.

The complementary assets of Center for Community Change and New Organizing Institute and the collaborative partnership between all three organizations sustained PAZ through its early years of development. PAZ is also a leading partner in the coalition, One Arizona, a collaborative of other grassroots and community organizations in the state working on non-partisan civic engagement. In addition, organizers established PAZ en Acción, a sister 501c4 organization to PAZ, as a vehicle for direct voter mobilization and electoral organizing. With the formation of a political action committee (a 527 organization administered by PAZ en Acción) PAZ en Acción partners on various campaigns with other grassroots and labor organizations in the state. Their electoral campaigns included both the defeat of SB1070's architect, Senator Russell Pearce, in a 2011 recall election as well as an attempt to defeat Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio in 2012. The Campaign for Arizona's Future, also known as the “Adiós Arpaio” Campaign, was a joint effort between PAZ en Acción and the Phoenix-based local of UNITE-HERE, a union representing thousands of immigrant workers in the service and hospitality industry.

PAZ's main priorities are leadership development and civic engagement for immigrant rights and political change in Arizona. As a result, PAZ's organizing approach is rooted in three key elements: 1) the intensive training and support of young leaders; 2) the centrality of the movement building organizing approach; and 3) a volunteer-based, member-driven program for direct action, issue and electoral organizing. Where certain models of political organizing rely heavily on paid staff and canvassers, PAZ depends on the recruitment, training, and development of its members and volunteer leaders as the foundation of its organizing strategy. PAZ draws much of its volunteer power from the Phoenix area, where over 60 percent of the state's electorate resides, and has also expanded its geographic reach beyond Maricopa County to include Mesa, Yuma, and Tucson.

Movement building trainings, with roots in the Farmworker movement, anchor all civic engagement and grassroots organizing activities. The training draws upon the values and lived experiences of leaders through storytelling and teaches participants the

skills necessary for effective strategy, team building, group decision-making, and volunteer recruitment.<sup>9</sup> These trainings have been essential for developing skilled and committed youth leaders in Arizona, for deepening their motivation for action by consciousness-raising, and for cultivating their sense of political agency. In total, nearly 1,200 people have participated in a movement building training since 2009, just prior to the formation of PAZ. The energy, commitment, and newfound civic skills of young people trained through movement building have enabled PAZ to quickly emerge as a political force in Arizona. For most, becoming a leader in PAZ is a transformative way to connect one's personal experiences of fear, intimidation, and uncertainty, with tangible opportunities for hope in a brighter future and the possibility of change.

**Table 1: PAZ and PAZ En Acción Facts & Figures**

Volunteer contacts in database:	9,082
Email list:	10,704
New voter registrations since 2010:	51,827*

\* Includes 34,327 registrations from 2012 Adiós Arpaio Campaign.

## ■ Campaign Achievements & Impact

Beginning with the 103-day prayer vigil, PAZ and PAZ en Acción have pursued a variety of organizational and political action strategies, garnering a powerful new voice in the fight for immigrant rights and yielding positive outcomes in civic engagement, electoral campaigns, and policy advocacy. These achievements signify how PAZ and PAZ en Acción are critical to building a grassroots infrastructure in Arizona. With hundreds of new leaders trained in civic participation and over 51,827 new voter registrations, PAZ and Paz en Acción are a credible new grassroots force. They are poised to dramatically shift the political balance in Arizona in the next ten years. PAZ also has created a

vibrant organizational mechanism for impacting the pressing concerns faced by Latino families. Four collective action tactics are central to the organization's successful organizing and mobilization: prayer vigils, voter engagement, electoral campaigns, and policy advocacy.

The **prayer vigils** are an important organizing tool that has mobilized individuals and families most affected by the rampant fear and intimidation within Arizona's anti-immigrant environment. Vigils at the Arizona state capitol, at the White House, and at the U.S. Supreme Court created momentum for the organization and energized Latinos, especially youth, to speak out against anti-immigrant policies and elected officials. The PAZ vigils inspire solidarity and empowerment within Arizona's Latino community by connecting leaders to broader movement for immigrant rights. These public demonstrations of faith in action are a signature of PAZ's growing power. The vigils also have served as an entrée for new leaders to get involved.

Like the vigils, **voter engagement** strategies contribute to changing the narrative of the Latino electorate in Arizona. Traditionally thought of as a disempowered and disengaged constituency, Latinos are registering in record numbers through the efforts of PAZ and its partners. To date, PAZ and PAZ en Acción helped register nearly one third of the 160,000 new Latino voters registered in the state since 2008. PAZ and its collaborating partners have trained hundreds of volunteer leaders to work in teams using a variety of voter outreach techniques, including door-to-door canvassing, house meetings, and phone banks. Together, and often in oppressive heat, these volunteer teams organize voters in their communities, and turn them out to vote in crucial local and state elections. Moreover, voter engagement is a significant strategy for recruiting PAZ members and for outreach to otherwise marginalized constituencies. Voter information programs have been one forum in which PAZ educates the community on elections and on local, state, and federal policy issues. These include information sessions about the implications of the Supreme Court's ruling on SB1070, the impact of President Obama's announcement of Deferred Action for undocumented youth, and the



need for increased civic participation through voter registration and elections.

**Electoral campaigns** complement PAZ's voter education and engagement initiatives. PAZ en Acción acts as an organizational intermediary in the electoral arena: encouraging the direct voter participation of Latinos as well as training, developing, and mentoring young people who are now leading campaign teams and running for local office themselves. These campaigns are run through PAZ en Acción's political action committee and are another aspect of PAZ's organizational growth. They serve as a primary organizing tool for accumulating political power. Through its focus on electoral organizing, PAZ en Acción has sought to hold elected officials accountable for their anti-immigrant policies and practices and to increase pro-immigrant voices in local and state government.

The defeat of Senate President Russell Pearce, the election of Phoenix City Council member Daniel Valenzuela and the Adios Arpaio Campaign are tangible evidence that the priorities of Arizona's immigrant families, youth, and the wider Latino community are better represented in the electoral arena. Moreover, three young people who first got involved in politics through the fight against SB1070 recently ran for elected office in 2012. Pastor Ian Danley, a PAZ leader and board member, successfully won a seat on the Phoenix Union School Board. Raquel Terán, one of PAZ's original staff members, was a first-time candidate in the state senate race. Though she lost her primary challenge by only 113 votes,

Terán employed many of the same organizing and leadership skills she learned through her staff experience at PAZ. Similarly, a third youth leader, Pedro Lopez, age 20, successfully secured one of three seats on the Cartwright School Board, winning the highest vote total among the five candidates for the office.

"I believe that my success is a shared responsibility...Petra and Raquel saw something in me and after only two months offered me a job. ... They coached and mentored me. They invested in me in national trainings and different conventions. ...I'm grateful for that and for the community."

-PEDRO LOPEZ

With a mix of victory and defeat, lessons can be drawn from each campaign about how grassroots organizations like PAZ can empower and organize the Latino community, even within an intensely anti-immigrant political environment. No race more illustrates this phenomenon than the 2012 effort to defeat Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. This campaign demonstrates a robust volunteer-based organizing approach, the importance of a leadership team structure, and the power of a well-coordinated and agile grassroots coalition.

The Adios Arpaio Campaign signifies a critical moment for the immigrant rights movement in Arizona. Despite Arpaio's victory over democratic challenger Paul Penzone, thousands of new Latino voters registered and voted against Arpaio. Beginning in April 2012, staff from PAZ en Acción and UNITE-HERE joined forces to recruit, train, and support a small campaign staff with hundreds of volunteers. Staff members and volunteers registered 34,327 new voters then turned them out to vote. Between April and October 2012, PAZ en Acción scheduled over 7,754 volunteer shifts for voter registration and engagement activities. The Campaign fueled an early voting program that yielded record turnout.<sup>10</sup> On Election Day, hundreds of volunteers ran a massive get-out-the-vote program. Table 2 illustrates the organizational and political capacity generated during the Adios Arpaio Campaign.



**Table 2: Political Capacity in the Adiós Arpaio Campaign: Staff, Volunteer, and Partner Activity**

	PAZ en Acción	Campaign for Arizona's Future (Unite-HERE)	Campaign Total
Paid Organizers*	8	8	16
Active Volunteers	2,167	1,097	3,264
Volunteer Shifts	7,754	7,124	14,883
Voter Registrations	17,295	17,032	34,327
Doors Knocked	50,605	36,052	86,657
Conversations at door	10,946	8,222	19,168

Source: Review of organizational records

\*PAZ campaign staff included a field director, a deputy field director, two regional directors, a data director, and eight to eleven organizers at any given time.

The campaign possessed a nimble strategy to adapt to changing and uncertain circumstances. For example, in the weeks leading up to November 6, it was discovered that voter outreach materials printed in Spanish by the Maricopa County elections office contained the wrong election date.<sup>11</sup> Outrage among activists surged. PAZ en Acción with other groups like Citizens for a Better Arizona mounted public pressure on Helen Purcell, the Maricopa County Recorder. Within days, Purcell issued a public apology and made a commitment of \$30,000 to run advertisements in Spanish-language press correcting the information for voters.<sup>12</sup>

The Campaign also prepared for the likelihood that many provisional and early ballots might not be counted. Despite the unprecedented voter engagement and mobilization, Arpaio emerged as the front-runner on Election Day. Within hours of election results that favored an Arpaio victory over Penzone, PAZ en Acción and its partners activated a team of volunteers to ensure a final and accurate count of all ballots. It came to light that more than 600,000 provisional and early ballots had yet to be counted statewide. In Maricopa County alone, the total was close to 460,000 ballots. PAZ en Acción and its partners at UNITE-HERE and the Campaign for Arizona's Future responded immediately. They launched an aggressive effort to guarantee that all votes were counted within the required ten-day processing deadline,

especially given concerns about Latino voter suppression.<sup>13</sup> Such demands for fairness and justice in Arizona's election system propelled Arizona back into the national spotlight, including calls from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid for an accurate count in Arizona.<sup>14</sup> Close races were still being called almost two weeks later, including the Congressional seat formerly held by Representative Gabrielle Giffords that went to Democrat Ron Barber. Ultimately, Sheriff Arpaio won by 7 percent, his closest race ever.

As important as electoral campaigns have been for PAZ's growth, **policy advocacy** also allows the organization to train and develop its leaders, build power for collective action, and demonstrate the political presence of the Latino community. Mobilizing for policy change enables PAZ to influence legislative outcomes that directly impact Arizona's immigrant families. For example, in 2011 Senate President Pearce proposed SB1611, an immigrant omnibus package with a series of new anti-immigrant provisions that included revoking the citizenship of U.S. born children and requiring health care providers, educators, social workers, and business to verify immigration status before hiring or providing services. SB1611 also would have made it unlawful for a person to operate a motor vehicle if unlawfully present in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

PAZ worked closely with its members and organizational allies to defeat the legislation by educat-



ing, training, and mobilizing an opposition campaign. PAZ implemented grassroots’ training sessions on the legislative process (“How a Bill Becomes a Law” training). They organized legislative meetings between PAZ leaders and legislators about the pending legislation, and they mobilized support and visibility through prayer vigils at the state capitol. PAZ also facilitated thousands of calls to state legislators, and when the legislation was brought to the Senate, leaders filled the Senate gallery. In the end, *all* anti-immigrant provisions were defeated. Through this campaign, PAZ increased the political capacity of its members by providing community education, advocacy skills training, and multiple opportunities for public action. Moreover, this campaign success increased PAZ’s credibility as a politically viable organization and built momentum for the eventual recall of Pearce.

In addition to state policy advocacy, PAZ engages actively in the national movement for comprehensive immigration reform. In December 2011, PAZ became a member of the executive committee for the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), a national network of immigrant rights organizations. Joining other immigrant rights groups around the country, PAZ has developed a Family Preservation Council to support and educate families facing deportation and to foster better relationships with local and regional Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices. PAZ also has contributed to local organizing for the DREAM Act. PAZ joined the “No Dream Deferred Coalition” in 2012 and aims to inform and support families who qualify for deferred action. PAZ has developed written materials and sponsored informational programs to educate the community on the application process and the implications of the new

policy. These examples highlight how PAZ is now a leader in the national immigrant rights movement.

## ■ Moving Ahead

PAZ has advanced considerably towards its goals of increasing the voice, visibility, and participation of immigrants and Latinos in Arizona. PAZ draws its power from a highly motivated and increasingly skilled cohort of young leaders as well as a robust organizing approach and growing alliances across the state. As a result, the organization has implemented successful strategies for engaging and empowering the Latino community to change the anti-immigrant political landscape. With support from its national partners, the Center for Community Change and the New Organizing Institute, PAZ is positioned as an important player within the national immigrant rights movement and among funders.

Creativity and experimentation have been the hallmark of PAZ’s organizational development.<sup>16</sup> As it looks to the future, PAZ will need to find ways of maintaining its energy and momentum for campaigns while focusing on organizational sustainability. Moving ahead, PAZ has four priorities. First, the organization wants to grow its capacity for developing Latino youth as organizers. Building on the successful model of values-based and volunteer-driven organizing, PAZ will support leadership development by expanding its organizer-training program. Second, PAZ will continue to advance state and federal legislation that counter-acts anti-immigrant rhetoric and supports the wellbeing and safety of immigrant and Latino families. Such policy efforts will include a push for national comprehensive immigration reform in 2013, access to drivers’ licenses for undocumented individuals, and in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students. Along with its policy advocacy initiatives, PAZ en Acción will continue to engage the growing political power of Latinos to impact electoral campaigns. Finally, PAZ will focus on organization building, continuing to strengthen and grow its infrastructure for organizing, leadership development, and collective action. Together, these priorities are intended to strengthen PAZ for the long-term and create a sustainable and lasting organization.

## Organizational Profile at a Glance: Promise Arizona (c3) & Promise Arizona in Action (c4)

www.promiseaz.org

**Mission:** *To build the political power of the Latino community from the ground up and ensure that we are full participants in the public life of Arizona.*

### ■ Organizational Priorities:

- ▶ Recruiting and training volunteers to be community leaders, particularly youth leaders.
- ▶ Registering, mobilizing and activating voters to increase the voting power of immigrants and Latinos in Arizona.
- ▶ Holding politicians accountable to fully serve our community and encouraging Promise Arizona leaders to run for public office.
- ▶ Organizing campaigns to defeat anti-immigrant legislation and promote laws that benefit our community.
- ▶ Building the organizational capacity of our movement and collaborating with like-minded allies in Arizona and nationally.

### ■ c3 Achievements:

- ▶ Successfully held a 103-day prayer vigil opposing the passage of SB 1070 in 2010.
- ▶ Recruited and developed over 1300 volunteer leaders through bilingual movement building trainings.
- ▶ Bolstered Latino voter registrations by more than 50K since 2010.
- ▶ Partnered with state and national immigrant rights coalitions including One Arizona and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement.
- ▶ Defeated 2011 anti-immigrant legislation in Arizona.
- ▶ Facilitated “Know your Rights” public events for immigrants and their families prior to the June 2012 Supreme Court ruling on SB 1070.
- ▶ Facilitated education events on Deferred Action applications for over 5,500 Arizonans.
- ▶ Developed a Family Preservation Council to support and educate families facing deportation and to build relationships with local and regional Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices.

### ■ c4 Achievements:

- ▶ Recruited and trained cadre of young organizers for electoral organizing, including voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaign tools.

- ▶ With its partner organizations, registered 34,327 new voters for the 2012 election in Maricopa County.
- ▶ Mobilized voters to defeat Senate President Russell Pearce in the 2011 recall election.
- ▶ Sponsored a two-day training for young immigrant leaders interested in running for elected office.
- ▶ Joined the “No Dream Deferred” Coalition to ensure that qualified children of immigrants have access to the information and resources needed for processing deferred action applications.
- ▶ Organized the “Adios Arpaio” Campaign in collaboration with UNITE-HERE and the Campaign for Arizona’s Future to attempt to defeat Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

### ■ Organizational Partners, Allies, and Funders

#### ARIZONA PARTNERS

UNITE HERE

One Arizona

- ▶ Arizona Advocacy Network Foundation
- ▶ Arizona Center for Empowerment
- ▶ Border Action Network
- ▶ Democracia USA
- ▶ Mi Familia Vota Education Fund
- ▶ Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ
- ▶ Protecting Arizona’s Family Coalition Educational Fund
- ▶ Central Arizonans for a Sustainable Economy

#### NATIONAL ALLIES

Center for Community Change

New Organizing Institute

FIRM (*member of executive committee*)

United We Dream Campaign

National Immigration Forum

#### c3 FUNDERS

Individual donors

Open Society Foundation

McMiles Foundation

Ford Foundation

Needmor Foundation

Center for Community Change

Marguerite Casey Foundation

#### c4 AND POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE FUNDERS

Individual donors

UNITE-HERE

The Atlantic Philanthropies

Rockefeller Family Foundation

Bauman Foundation

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## Endnotes

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