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## What is MIA - Past and Present

Migrants Incorporated was the first migrant basic service delivery agency in Minnesota. They existed from 1967 to 1970 and were federally funded. They were assigned several tasks to do in a certain part of the state. They were a very able organization; but their problem was that they over extended themselves by taking in additional projects and by trying to provide services in the whole state and parts of Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

In addition, they continuously committed themselves financially ahead of anticipated funding. Finally the federal funding did not come in time and the agency went bankrupt.

A fellow by the name of Arnolito Garcia who was an outreach worker of Migrants Incorporated continued to assist migrants; as many of us did by putting them up in our homes and taking them to Welfare, help them to seek food stamps, etc. Arnolito Garcia then started Twin Cities Resettlement, which later folded. Some of it's supporters went to the rural areas and reopened the program and called it Minnesota Migrant Council.

Arnolito Garcia and some Vista workers remained in the Twin Cities and started Migrants In Action. These incidents occurred in 1971. In 1972 Migrants in Action obtained a 2 story house from St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, for a minimal sum and gained some funds from a foundation to rehabilitate it.

This house is used for emergencies and housed MIA's first office. Operation expenses were financed, mostly by local churches and on a day by day basis. It was staffed by Garcia and a handful of Vista workers. Garcia left in 1972 and Eustolio Benzvides, who was one of the Vista workers became the Executive Director. Eustolio was terminated in October of 1973, when Frank Guzman became the Executive Director.

In 1973, the Hill (Northwest) Foundation gave MIA a three year descending fund of 30,000, 20,000, 10,000. This was intended to be start up monies which would enable the agency to operate and seek other fundings, hopefully from the government.

The staff consisted of the Executive Director, secretary-receptionist, and 2 outreach workers. The agency also received \$20,000 from the Bush Foundation in 1974 for operational costs.

In 1974 the agency began taking in staff through a subsidizing program, the Welfare's Work Incentive Program (W.I.N.). From 1974 through 1977 approximately 8 individuals became MIA staff through W.I.N. In 1975 MIA began taking on staff through the use of CETA subsidies. Approximately 20-25 staff at MIA were subsidized through CETA programs.

The agency, in 1978 began cutting back on the use of CETA referrals to MIA to fill it's staff needs. The reason for this was :

- I. The reimbursement system demanded that MIA have a large cash flow (general fund) to meet payrolls, taxes and insurances on the subsidized employees.

2. The agency decided only to create positions that resulted from programs and funding that it received and to hire the most qualified individuals for the positions. Part of the problem with hiring many WIN or CETA referrals was that most were unskilled and brought many problems with them to the agency.

The U.S. Department of Labor for years, had traditionally funded state employment services to deliver manpower services to migrants. But MMC started receiving about \$100,000 in 1973 to deliver "services to migrants."

In 1976, the DOL changed the formula it used in establishing the amount of funding a particular state received. In Minnesota that amount changed from \$127,000 to \$1,200,000 for 1976. MMC then invited MIA to subcontract for approximately \$300,000 for 1976. MIA and MMC have continued a subcontract agreement ever since, renewable at the beginning of each year. We have absorbed all CETA and WIN personnel into the "303" migrant programs.

In 1975 MIA received its first government grant. It was for \$38,000 and came from the Governor's 4% discretionary funds that originated from DOL. In 1977 the agency decided to go after funds to serve the Latino population. We received approximately \$160,000 from the Governor's office and the state legislature to operate a State-wide chemical dependency program for the Latino population.

In June of 1978 MIA received a grant from St. Paul CETA <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ operate a tree felling project that would employ disadvantaged individuals.

In September 1978, MIA entered into a subcontract with the St. Paul Work Equity Program (WEP), to provide coaching and counseling to Spanish speaking WEP recipients.

From 1973 through 1976, St. Paul United Way provided all of MIA's bookkeeping service. Since MIA's programs and funding were increasing substantially, United Way thought MIA should do its own accounting and bookkeeping. Starting in January of 1977, MIA did its own bookkeeping.

From 1973 to 1975 the staffing patterns went from 3 to 8 persons and agency decisions and functions were done in a communal and democratic fashion. After this period, the agency began to get larger and because of government funding had to structure itself accordingly, with the Executive Director taking a more dominant role.

Migrants In Action came into existence because thousands of migrants came into the cities and the existing agencies were unable to accommodate to the basic needs of these unique people. The staff concentrated its efforts on locating resources for its clients, taking them to these resources and advocating for them.

In 1974 two things stand out:

1. After referring clients to service deliverers, it was discovered that they later returned with the same problems at a later date.
2. We were so used to dealing with crisis, that we dealt with everything as if it were a crisis or an emergency.

The agency sought and received a \$5,000 grant from the Christian Sharing Fund to bring about social change through a formal social change program in 1975. We consider this program as very beneficial in MIA's later relationships with churches, government agencies and industry.

Procedures were drawn up in how to deal with crisis situations and also to be able to provide long range counseling and planning.

Individual staff then began training themselves in specific areas such as health delivery, housing, education and manpower.

The agency then saw that it was necessary to support the causes of other oppressed people and the staff were encourage to do so. Areas such as civil rights, Wounded Knee trial, women's issues, human rights issues, and welfare recipients, etc.

The agency called on the Legal Aid of Ramsey County to come to the aid of migrant workers and LARC responded with law suits; <sup>such as with</sup> and the St. Paul Department of Education when it did not provide adequate education to Hispanic children.

Because of it's growth and committment to government structure, the agency can hardly be called a store front agency anymore.

The Board of Directors has gone through some changes also. Sometimes the Board met several times a year. The Board was made up at times with mostly uneducated folks, and at times with highly educated professional people. At times the Board wanted only migrants on it's Board, sometimes only Chicanos, another time 51% migrants. Sometimes it has annual meetings and other years it doesn't. But mostly the Board has been made up of concerned, friendly, and very helpful individuals.

Some of the things that stand out in the past year<sup>s</sup> are:

1. Migrants In Action knows more about resettling migrants than any other agency in the country, (Quote from Fred Romero, Assistant to the Secretary of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor, Mr. Romero has written articles and books in resettling.
2. In 7 years Migrants In Action has served more than 15,000 individuals.



3. MIA has assisted other Chicano/Latino agencies start up or to grow. Agencies such as Centro Cultural Chicano in Minneapolis, Spanish Speaking Cultural Club of St. Paul, Oficina Legal, Urban Leagues, LEAP program, St. Paul TVI Spanish speaking program, Chicano Federation, State bi-lingual program, bi-lingual program of St. Paul, etc.
4. The hiring of Brian Kanes as a Chicano organizer in 1974 (we kept this a secret from the community) brought about in a direct manner---the revised U.S. Census Report of 49,500 Latinos in Minnesota, the Chicano Federation; and the suit against the city of St. Paul's Education System.
5. The Social Change Project of 1975.
6. Scores of folks who were unemployed used MIA as a training and learning center and went on to better things.
7. The community entered and participated in Chicano issues.
8. Legislation that is beginning to fulfill the needs of the Latino population.
9. And the thousands of people whose lives we hope were affected in a positive manner in some way or another.