ORGANIZING THE GATEWAY CITY

How do campaigns for economic & social justice organize the fragmented St. Louis metropolitan area?

Scott Humphrey | 2014

**PROBLEM**

Fragmentation impedes collaboration & limits solidarity

- Political constituencies are splintered by ward based factionalism, metro area sprawls across 87 municipalities;
- Ongoing racial division inherits legacy of segregation & racialized poverty;
- Antagonistic state legislature puts progressive groups on defensive.

“Prejudice is literally baked into the city’s brown bricks.”
-- Catholic Services Director

**APPROACH**

Case study interview model shows how organizations work through networks

- Objective was to determine how organizers working for economic & social justice identified priorities and worked within & outside existing institutions;
- Historical analysis of political, economic & social issues placed contemporary struggles in context;
- Accounts of progressive groups working through congregations were tested with interviews of faith leaders & laity.

**FINDINGS**

Congregation-based community organizing builds power across fractured space

- Secular and progressive groups rely on relationships with faith leaders and congregation organizers to reach “pre-organized” St. Louisians;
- Priorities for campaigns are set in concert with more conservative suburban church-goers and the local Catholic leadership;
- Building power across the urban and suburban metro area, campaigns attempt to jump scale.

**CAMPAIGN CASE STUDY**

Fast food worker organizing

**STATEWIDE BALLOT INITIATIVES**

Campaign case study

- Statewide ballot initiatives