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THEMSELVES

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN for
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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IndyCAN!

BY BETH GRIFFIN



Photo by Heather Wilson, PICO National Network for IndyCAN © 2012

2012 INDYCAN FOUNDING CONVENTION.

Faced with growing violence and unemployment in their city, dozens of Indianapolis clergy gathered like a Midwestern thundercloud and coalesced into a multi-faith, interracial organization to address the scourge of poverty in their midst. The Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN) was established in 2011 with the mission to develop leadership, increase civic participation, and improve conditions for the most vulnerable and low-income people in Marion County, Indiana.

With support from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and grant assistance from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), IndyCAN has quickly become an effective vehicle to channel the social justice efforts of 28 parishes and congregations representing 25,000 people.

“We’re bringing a moral voice into dialogue with civic and community leaders,” says Fr. John McCaslin, one of IndyCAN’s founders. “We believe in our ability to carry the Gospel outside the walls of our worship space and into the world.”

IndyCAN has tackled some of the most pressing issues in Marion County, including scant public transportation, burgeoning violence, and lack of jobs. But it started with people sharing their stories with one another.

“It was eye-opening for me to listen to other clergy from various faith traditions and hear the parallels in people’s lives and realize the struggles of ministry are happening across the city,” Fr. McCaslin says. “When we came together, we learned about how community organizing works and how we could begin to effect decisions in our community that reflect our values.”

IndyCAN tapped into PICO National Network (People Improving Communities through Organizing), a national network that promotes faith-based community organizing, to train community leaders from the member congregations. Angela Eubank, from the Christian Love Missionary Bible Church, was in the first training group. She channeled her grief from the homicide death of her adult son into work as the secretary of IndyCAN’s board of directors.

“IndyCAN is awesome. We’re all in it and we’re of one accord. It’s not about religion; it’s about saving lives and having a better, safer place to live,” Angela says. “My goal is to help make sure another mother does not have to dress her child for a casket.”

IndyCAN secured a commitment from government and law enforcement officials to implement Operation Ceasefire, a violence-reduction strategy pioneered successfully in Boston during the 1990s. The program aims to lower homicides in Indianapolis by 50%. It uses a “call-in” technique, where youth involved in violence are invited to meet with members of the justice, social service, legal, and religious communities. Shoshanna Spector, IndyCAN’s executive director, says the purpose is to have conversations about consequences. “The message is the community cares for them, wants them to have an opportunity for a good future, and won’t accept violence as a way to solve problems,” she says.

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Catholic Campaign for Human Development
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends in Christ,

Happy Year of Faith! Here at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), we are privileged to see faith in action every day. We're thankful that Pope Benedict XVI designated this year for Catholics to strengthen their faith and its practice.



When people of faith work together toward a common goal, they create a powerful force that diminishes the racial, ethnic, economic, and congregational barriers that separate them. Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN), described in these pages, is a terrific example of how dozens of Catholic parishes and other congregations are mobilizing to help people lift themselves out of poverty.

With the timely and generous support of CCHD, IndyCAN has trained clergy and lay leaders to develop critical tools to channel members' initial enthusiasm into sustained action to change public policy. Amazingly, the group that began in 2010 as a sponsoring committee of pastors has become a vibrant organization of more than 28 active parishes and congregations that already has multiple successes to its credit.

IndyCAN is bringing the voice of faith to the public square. By putting the Word of God into action to develop leaders among low-income Hoosiers, IndyCAN is helping to ensure that all people have access to the fruits of democracy. Like CCHD, IndyCAN leads with its values and promotes human dignity.

In these challenging times, human dignity is threatened in so many ways. I hope you will visit our new Poverty USA website, www.povertyusa.org, to see our vision in action. Drawing on recent statistics, it paints a stark picture of life for our 46 million neighbors who are living in poverty. But it also offers stories of hope from CCHD's experience and suggests prayerful and dynamic action for people of faith to undertake.

You have read in these pages about the Review and Renewal of CCHD these past two years. We are poised to begin our Strategic National Grant Program, which was developed as an element of the Renewal. Under the program, CCHD will set aside funds to make significant grants that will have a dramatic impact on poverty in larger geographical areas. The actual amounts and funding priorities will be determined by the bishops' Subcommittee on the CCHD. They will be consistent with the organization's mission to focus on strategies to fight the root causes of poverty in the United States. Among the potential focal areas is addressing the myriad factors that increase poverty among families.

I look forward to sharing more details with you in another issue of *Helping People Help Themselves*.

As always, thank you for your continued support. You till the soil so we can spread the Good News by our actions.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ralph McCloud'.

Ralph McCloud
Director, Catholic Campaign for Human Development

For more information on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, visit www.usccb.org (search "Faithful Citizenship").



break the cycle of poverty

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Photo by Heather Wilson, PICO National Network for IndyCAN © 2012

PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING LINDA CLODFELTER (FAR LEFT) OF HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIANAPOLIS, GATHER AT THE 2012 INDYCAN FOUNDING CONVENTION.

“Operation Ceasefire brings all the pieces together—police, public safety, parole, community—and offers people a new chance at life,” Angela explains. “It targets people likely to kill or be killed in the next six months. They come in voluntarily, some with their parents, and they can get housing, jobs, transportation, social services. If they don’t take it, no one cuts them any slack if they commit a crime.”

Indianapolis is a metropolis of almost one million people, the majority of whom are white. Some 30% are black, and the Latino population has tripled in the last decade to 10%. IndyCAN crosses racial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, as well as religious ones. Charlie Davis, an IndyCAN leader on the city’s east side, identifies himself as a black man in a largely Anglo and Hispanic parish, St. Philip Neri. “I’m meeting people I never would have met. It’s rewarding to find so many who feel as I do about building community and lifting people up.”

“I understand now, more than ever before, how important it is to do whatever we can do to lift up our brothers and sisters, especially by reducing violence and keeping families together,” he adds.

Fr. McCaslin is the pastor of two parishes whose membership includes people from 35 nations. He says IndyCAN helps members “confront our own prejudice and see beauty in our differences rather than an obstacle to be overcome. We begin to see the image of God in one another, hear each other’s story, and care for one another. We can move beyond thinking, ‘I know a black or a Hispanic or a white person’ to a greater understanding of cultures and traditions.”

The organizers of IndyCAN began by listening to concerns voiced by parishes and congregations around the city. People were worried about job losses and the lack of opportunities to make a decent living. Shoshanna explains, “Indianapolis is at a crossroads. Manufacturing is still central to the economy, but many people don’t have access to the opportunity that created the middle class.”

“At a time of our highest unemployment, we also have a worker shortage,” she says. Specifically, manufacturing jobs and warehouses have moved to the suburbs—and away from the potential labor force. Some people in the city turned down jobs because they had no way to get to work.

IndyCAN addressed this frustration by working with regional transportation officials. The result is a new, multi-million-dollar “reverse commuter” bus system that takes low-income residents to jobs in outlying areas, with shuttle service to other worksites.

“CCHD is making it possible for people who are not ordinarily part of the democratic process to come together across cultures and congregations. People who never knew they shared the same values are working together and becoming a prophetic voice in our region,” Shoshanna says. CCHD helps IndyCAN sustain the initial momentum, developing leaders for the long haul. 

What Is CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed over \$280 million to more than 7,800 low-income-led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership

and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective, and so that CCHD’s investment in people will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between impoverished and affluent persons.

YOUNG ADULT FORMER REFUGEE SEEKS JUSTICE FOR OTHERS

BY JILL RAUH



KARL KUMODZI IS THIS YEAR'S CARDINAL BERNARDIN NEW LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER.

When Karl Kumodzi was a child, he and his mother fled their native Togo as refugees to escape from violence. “My family was very lucky” to find a home in the United States, Karl says. Inspired by his faith, Karl now seeks justice for others.

As one of 40 students selected as a 2011 Student Freedom Rider, who traced the footsteps of the 1961 civil rights freedom riders, Karl heard stories of courage in the face of injustice and nonviolent witness in response to hate. During the journey, Karl reflected on how communities of color in the United States “are still affected by the legacy of racism even after the reversal of segregation.” Institutional racial barriers remain, he noted, such as the lasting effects of redlining that prevented black families from buying homes in rapidly expanding suburbs in the decades after desegregation. Yet, one lasting impression from the freedom rides was this: the original riders “were normal people. Anyone can create change.” Karl decided that he wanted to be one of those people.

Back on campus at Stanford University, where Karl says he has “made my faith my own” through the

Catholic community there, Karl worked with other students to open a homeless shelter for the women they had met through their Night Outreach. The students spent countless hours researching insurance, location, and legal questions in order to make the new shelter, Hotel de Zink, a reality in early 2012. The shelter is student-run, and it seeks to empower its guests through affirmation of their dignity and through community meetings and a guest advocate program. Hotel de Zink, Karl says, allows students to form relationships with the homeless and learn about barriers they face, including lack of access to jobs and higher education, the shortage of affordable housing, domestic violence, and mental illness. Other students and guests are advocates: a few months ago they visited city hall to protest pending legislation to make sleeping in one’s car a finable offense.

As a teenager, Karl benefitted from TRIO/Gear Up Educational Talent Search, a federal program for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, ultimately earning a full scholarship from Stanford. Now he seeks greater opportunities for others, not only in the United States, but also globally. With his mother, Karl founded a nonprofit organization, Hidden Talent Foundation, in 2007. The foundation connects people and resources in the United States with students in Togo and Benin so they can access primary and secondary education and ultimately contribute to their country’s economic, political, and social development. Karl recently went to Togo on a Community-Based Research Fellowship to research extending the organization’s work to higher education as well.

What keeps him going, Karl says, is a “strong sense of responsibility and desire to give back” and the knowledge that “there is always hope with Jesus.” Amen to that! 

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