

## The Social Justice of Movement: Undocumented Immigrant Coalitions in the United States

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**Abstract :** This is a study of freedom riders and their courageous journey for civil rights, but the year was not 1961. It was 2003. This paper chronicles the emergence of a new civil rights movement for immigrant rights through an oral history of the 2003 U.S. Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR). During the height of the post-9/11 immigrant repression, a bloc of organizations inspired by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s mobilized 900 multinational immigrants and their allies in the fight for legal status, labor protections, family reunification, and civil rights. The activists visited over 100 U.S. cities, met with Congressional leaders in the nation's capital, and led a rally of over 50,000 people in New York City. This unified effort set the groundwork for the national May Day immigration protests of 2006. Movements can be characterized in two distinct ways: physical movement and social movements. In the past, historians have considered immigrants both as people and as participants in social movements. In contrast, studies of recent migrants tend to say little about their involvement in immigrant political mobilizations. The dominant literature on immigration portrays immigrants as objects of exclusion, border enforcement, detention, and deportation instead of strategic political actors. This paper aims to change this perception. It considers the Freedom Riders both as immigrants who were literally on the move and as participants in a social movement. Through interviews with participants and archival video footage housed at the University of California Los Angeles, it is possible to study this mobile protest as a movement. This contemporary immigrant struggle is an opportunity to explore the makeup and development of a heterogenous immigrant coalition and consider the relationship between population movements and social justice. In addition to oral histories and archival research, the study will utilize social movement literature, U.S. immigration and labor history, and Undocumented Critical Theory to expand the historiography of immigrant social movements in America.

**Keywords :** civil rights, immigrant social movements, undocumented communities, undocumented critical theory

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