

# Maria Carmen Valesquez

*Marion, Indiana*  
(Jan 1921 - 1985)

by Nicole Martinez-  
LeGrand, Indiana Historical  
Society

Sources:

- Indiana Historical Society. Oral History of Maria Carmen Velasquez, Indiana Latino History Project Interview, 25 June 2017. SC 3478 DVD 1460-1462
- Photo (Carmen):  
<http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16797coll38/id/385/rec/7>



LFD2017\_0373\_CARMEN\_PROFILE\_MIGRANT CENTER\_1962

*Photo Courtesy: Indiana Historical Society*

Maria Carmen (née Juárez) Velásquez was an advocate for migrant workers in Indiana and helped found the Associated Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc., known as AMOS. Carmen was born in Parsons, Kansas, in January 1921 but moved with her family to Chicago, Illinois, at a young age. Carmen's early childhood was affected by polio and she spent much of her time in Chicago hospitals and convalescent homes up until the age of fourteen. The care she received from nuns and social workers planted the seed for her future advocacy work.

Carmen met her future husband, Albert Velasquez in the 1930s. In 1941, they married in Chicago and then moved to Fairmount, Indiana in Grant County to live with Albert's family. Soon after starting their own family, they moved to Marion, Indiana. In total, she and Albert had ten children. In the late 1960s after the birth of her last child, Carmen began to walk out into the farm fields of Grant County to ask the farm laborers and their families of their spiritual and material needs. She sought out donations for these families. During this era, the Chicano Civil rights movement was rising and the work on behalf of farm laborers and their families shifted from charity to advocacy.

As the needs of the Chicano community in Grant County grew and her work expanded, she garnered the support of St. Paul's Church and the Third Order of St. Francis priests. In the early 1970s a seminarian worked with Carmen to write the articles of incorporation to develop the organization called Associated Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc, commonly known as AMOS. AMOS, a non-profit organization, funded by the Indiana Office of Economic Opportunities (Title III-B grant), advocated on behalf of migrant workers. AMOS had offices spread throughout Central and North Central Indiana. Carmen retired from migrant advocacy work in the early 1980s and passed away in 1985 at the age of 64.