

## **Hispanic leaders disavow organizer of today's march**

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### **Body**

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If protesters tread the sidewalks of Midtown today

in support of immigrant rights, they won't be **marching** with the blessing of **leaders** of Atlanta's **Hispanic** immigrant community.

The slightly renegade demonstration has been organized by an environmental activist who wants Americans and Latino immigrants to unite for change.

"I'm in favor of people obtaining the rights they deserve, especially if they work hard," said Scott Petersen, a registered nurse at Grady Hospital and the event **organizer**.

But the people may not be on the bandwagon.

"Nobody knows where he came from," said Teodoro Maus,

former consul general of Mexico in Atlanta. "We can't

hurt the cause by following a nut."

Petersen hopes to see 400 people in front of the First Presbyterian Church on Peachtree Street at 10 a.m. Sunday carrying placards in support of comprehensive immigration reform.

"As far as I know, he's working on his own," said Jerry Gonzalez, executive director of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials.

"I have no idea who this guy is."

Petersen, a 25-year Atlanta resident, is not **Hispanic**, but learned Spanish during travels to Mexico, he said.

He volunteered for the Initiative for a Green DeKalb, a community group formed to protect DeKalb County green space and clean up the South River.

Activism runs in his family. His mother, the late Eleanor P. Petersen, of Chicago, was a prominent feminist, president of the Donors Forum of Chicago, a regional association of more than 100 foundations, and headed the Illinois Fair Employment Practice Commission.

"I am a guy who has values and I live by my values," Petersen said.

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"We couldn't produce the carpet in our homes or the intown housing boom without Latino workers."

Petersen said **Hispanic** advocacy groups are too passive in response to a nationwide backlash against immigrants.

"I do not feel their approach right now - to be very passive and send flowers to legislators - is the right approach," Petersen said.

Last month, **Hispanic** activists delivered red, white and blue flowers to U.S. Sens. Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson, Gov. Sonny Perdue and other elected officials after the collapse of immigration reform legislation in Washington. The idea was to soften the tone of a vitriolic policy debate.

Petersen says he is working with several Colombian immigrants whom he hopes will mobilize the community. "They're extremely well educated and they're battle-hardened," Petersen said.

If enough people show for the protest, Petersen hopes the **march** will spread to the sidewalk in front of the nearby High Museum of Art.

He asks protesters to dress well and suggests they visit the museum afterwards.

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