

Our Day Laborer Committee

Voz Workers' Rights Education Project



Miguel García *President*

Miguel García is a day laborer who has worked with people from around the world. He has over 23 years of experience managing restaurants. He has been coming to the Worker Center for over 6 years. He was elected by the members as President of the Day Laborer Committee in 2018. As President, Miguel is responsible for promoting worker leadership within the Committee and with all members of the center.

He says, "I like to do this because I am helping my fellow workers. It's important that workers are leaders at Voz because we all support one another to make the worker center a better place, for example, looking for more job opportunities because that's how we make our living." One of his proudest accomplishments is the membership vote to raise their minimum wage at the center to \$17 an hour. "That was important because most regular jobs in the city pay minimum wage, which is around \$12." In addition to seeking work in landscaping, construction, and moving, Miguel volunteers many hours every week in meetings and workshops. He says that he likes to see how the worker center continues to get better, and that "I will continue to support all of my *compañeros*."

Quote:

"It's important that workers are leaders at Voz because we all support one another to make the worker center a better place." –Miguel García, President of the Day Laborer Committee



Javier Romero Jobs Representative

Javier Romero remembers the exact date he arrived at the Worker Center: February 16th, 2012. He now has a part time job, and in his free time he volunteers as the Jobs Representative on the Day Laborer Committee. “I’ve been on the Committee for a year and a half, and in that time we’ve gotten better organized, we’re always planning, and now little by little things are falling into place. We’ve also received training, and that’s helped folks get oriented and grounded. I like our Committee, things are going well, because you can share ideas and everyone else shares their opinions and whether they agree or not.” As the Jobs Representative, he says “Worker leadership is important here” in order to organize and seek collective solutions, and that “that has made the center better.” In the future, he “would like us to have our own building where we have more facilities, nothing too *elegante*, just the necessities. I hope that, one day, it will be a reality.”

Quote:

“I like our Committee, things are going well, because you can share ideas and everyone else shares their opinions and whether they agree or not.” –Javier Romero, Jobs Representative on the Day Laborer Committee



Luis Rosales Community Safety Representative

Luis Rosales has served as the community safety representative on the Day Laborer Committee since early 2019. When he first arrived in the U.S., he started out working as a dishwasher, then in a kitchen, and in cherry orchards. Before arriving at the Worker Center in 2009, he says “I didn’t know how to do many of the things I do now. Here I’ve learned a lot, like landscaping, bricklaying,” and many other types of work. Luis is also active in classes, and community advocacy in the city and at the State capitol. “I went to City Hall to speak to the mayor about donating the Worker Center lot to us. They finally did, and we celebrated here. We hope to have a permanent building in the future, and we’ve been talking to architects.” When the building is complete, Luis says “I think we should inscribe our names in stone so we can represent the time we’ve put into this place.” As a member of Voz’s leadership committee, Luis says “I wanted to join the committee because I’m interested in what happens at the Center and in supporting my fellow workers. As a committee member, I want everything to stay organized to the best of our ability. Here we are looking out for what is best for everyone.”

Quote:

“I wanted to join the committee because I’m interested in what happens at the Center and in supporting my fellow workers. Here we are looking out for what is best for everyone.” –Luis Rosales, Community Safety Representative on the Day Laborer Committee



Getulia Gonzalez Education Representative

Getulia Gonzalez first came to Voz’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Worker Center as a student in our Workplace Communication classes. She soon became interested in the jobs available through the Worker Center, and fought for her right to have an equal opportunity as a woman. She began to take job skills trainings and soon found a new job on a demolition crew.

As she was learning and working in a challenging environment, she didn’t lose sight of her passion: fighting for working women’s rights. She decided to organize with fellow women at the worker center for fair and equal treatment, and she formed a women’s leadership group that now meets monthly.

Getulia’s vision for her own growth, and for the collective growth of her peers, led her to be elected as Education Representative in Voz’s leadership group, the Day Laborer Committee. As Education Representative, she has developed and taught gender justice workshops. In 2019, she was nominated for Oregon Tradeswomen’s Women on the Rise award. She is a fearless leader who advocates for herself, other women, and for all workers.

Getulia says that being recognized as the Education Representative has led to other day laborers treating her with greater respect: “Thanks to joining the Committee, my coworkers now see me differently. They talk to me, respect me, and recognize that I’m part of the committee. They come and share their ideas with me often. Things really are changing.” She also has more confidence in herself: “Leadership is important. I wasn’t always this way, I’ve improved, I’ve gained confidence, I’ve dared to speak more, even if I make mistakes. It doesn’t matter if we make mistakes, because we can keep practicing.”

Quote:

“Leadership is important. I wasn’t always this way, I’ve improved, I’ve gained confidence, I’ve dared to speak more, even if I make mistakes. It doesn’t matter if we make mistakes, because we can keep practicing.” –Getulia Gonzalez, Education Representative on the Voz Day Laborer Committee



Jesus Godoy *Communications Representative*

Jesus Godoy is the Communications Representative on the Day Laborer Committee, where he has served enthusiastically since 2019. He says: “I arrived in Portland in March of 2018 and that November I joined the organization. The first thing you get at Voz is a sense of belonging. You can see that the leadership wants to share knowledge and training with the members. Voz is an institution of the utmost importance to the Latino community and everyone who has a desire to work but has little access to the benefits offered by this great country. I feel honored to be part of the Day Laborer Committee since September 2019. I wanted to gain economic stability and be recognized as a member of society who contributes through my work, my actions, my growth. Over the past 20 years working at a bank in my home country, I gained administrative and management skills that I am dedicated to sharing with Voz. I want to join this group of people who direct the organization, and who show up every day to show that we are a place of principles, values, and rules that meet high standards. We can show that with effort and tenacity, productive people can be integrated into the system even if they had been formerly seen as unimportant, worthless. It is only through leadership and vision that we can fulfill the purpose of the organization and work together to reach our goals.”

Quote:

“The first thing you get at Voz is a sense of belonging. You can see that the leadership wants to share knowledge and training with the members.” –Jesus Godoy, Communications Representative on the Voz Day Laborer Committee



Jose de Jesus Gonzalez *Advocacy Representative*

Jose de Jesus Gonzalez was elected as the Advocacy Representative on Voz’s Day Laborer Committee in March of 2019. Jose has been involved in Voz since before we opened the Worker Center in 2008. “I’m a day laborer and I participate in the Day Laborer Committee as well. I wanted to join the Committee in order to understand how things run, and better understand Voz’s organizational structure. Voz has several programs, and the Worker Center is one of them.” He says that “The Center helps create a bridge to stable work.” Jose learned carpentry and building skills working with his family. He says, “When I do day labor, I like to work in construction and carpentry. Since I was a teenager I used to help my dad at work, he was a builder and so was my brother.”

“This has been a learning experience for me. I’ve learned how to paint, and a little bit of English. I didn’t go to school, so all the English I know, I learned here.” Jose began painting after attending an arts workshop. For him, painting is a form of communication and mobilizing others. “My paintings tell my story, as an immigrant. Painting is a way to express myself, these are my lived experiences. People are crossing the border, and every year many die from the heat, thirst, and hunger. It’s an effect of the system, that’s our reality! The US manipulates the situations in Latin American countries. When politicians talk about immigration, and how they don’t want immigrants coming here, they are hiding the fact that they are causing a lot of the problems.”

In 2018 and 2019, Jose taught two workshops for other day laborers about art and activism. “Often, people aren’t very well informed, because they haven’t had the chance to go to school. My art can be seen as a kind of protest.”

His vision for the future includes organizing for immigrant rights, for example, “My vision for a more just future here at the Worker Center and in the city is that there are driver’s licenses for all.” He has also been an active participant in our regular Know Your Rights workshops and our work with Portland United Against Hate.

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“My paintings tell my story, as an immigrant. Painting is a way to express myself, these are my lived experiences. People are crossing the border, and every year many die from the heat, thirst, and hunger. It’s an effect of the system, that’s our reality!” –Jose de Jesus Gonzalez, Advocacy Representative on the Voz Day Laborer Committee



Sergio Serrano Reyes Finance Representative

Sergio Serrano Reyes was elected as Finance Representative to the Day Laborer Committee in March of 2019. He says: “I wanted to participate in the committee because I’m Latino, and the majority of people at the worker center are Latino, and that’s why I try to help.” His past work experience has strengthened his leadership: “In Mexico I was working in companies as a technician with machines and tools, and I was in charge of supervising departments and staff.”

If you ask Sergio what his priority is as a member of the Day Laborer Committee, he’ll tell you: “I would like the worker center to grow, culturally and economically.” As a day laborer, he shows up every day looking for new opportunities, and still finds time to serve his community as a volunteer, attending workshops, meetings, and worker assemblies. Every month he presents a financial report on worker’s donations to a community fund called “The Day Labor Dollar,” and he has participated in various activities to strengthen workforce development among members.

Quote:

“I would like the worker center to grow, culturally and economically.” –Sergio Serrano Reyes, Finance Representative on the Voz Day Laborer Committee