



FALL 2015



RELIABLE WORKERS



READY TO SERVE



day worker center of mountain view

Area Rents Out of Control: Advocacy Critical for Workers Lacking Funds and Access



Local contractor and former Day Worker Center member Jose Vega Murillo joins staff, workers, and volunteers to raise awareness of the plight of renters.

With area rents at an all-time high, low-income workers are hit hardest. Expensive, difficult-to-find housing may soon force people with low to moderate incomes—day laborers, teachers, police officers—to move out of the Bay Area to find affordable places to live, draining our community of vital services. Because people with low incomes are perilously threatened by skyrocketing housing costs, the Day Worker Center is deeply involved in advocating for measures to protect tenants' rights and control skyrocketing rents.

Representing the monumental struggles of countless others, here are the stories of three compañer@s facing housing crises.

- Recent rent hikes have forced **Ana Vazquez** to work excessive hours to make more money, meaning a lot less time that she can be at home reading to her 6-year-old daughter, Valeria, helping her develop academically, physically, and socially.

Home for Ana and Valeria is a two-bedroom apartment—a space they share with two more families and three other people. Ana can cook in the kitchen, but must store her food and dishes in the tiny room she shares with Valeria. Communal living is better than

being homeless, but it's far from ideal for raising a child.

Ana dreams of having their own apartment and seeing her name on a rental contract. But the nightmare that haunts her is a looming rent hike that could threaten even their current precarious living arrangements.

- When **Cory Hall** moved to California a few months ago, the transition was fraught with uncertainty. But at least his new apartment was nailed down—or so he thought. Then while

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50%
*Average
Bay Area
rent increase
since 2010*

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RISKING IT ALL FOR
EDUCATION: STORIES
OF COURAGE

P6

COMMUNITY SPIRIT:
WORKERS DONATE TIME
TO HELP COMMUNITY

P7

THANKS TO YOU,
NEW KITCHEN
IS "COOKING"!





RISKING IT ALL FOR EDUCATION STORIES OF COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE

“A Daring Journey”: Your Inroad into the Lives of Workers

The Day Worker Center celebrated 19 years of serving the community by premiering *A Daring Journey* at the Community School of Music and Arts on November 6.

After the screening, producer and director Dorothy Fadiman (above, right) moderated a question and answer session. Panelists were (L-R) the film’s narrator María Marroquín and co-producer Owen Tomlins, along with film stars poet Luis Bejines and the Robles family (Ruben Sr., Janet, and Vassar graduate Ruben Jr.). Before the film, specially invited guests chatted with Dorothy at a “Meet the Filmmaker” fundraising reception.

Fast Facts ...

- *A Daring Journey*’s narrator and translator is none other than the our very own Executive Director María Marroquín!
- The Day Worker Center staff and workers are indebted to everyone who generously donated their time to make our event a success!

What would you risk to give you or your child the education needed to live a life free of extreme poverty? Would you leave behind family and friends, everything you know and love to trudge a scorching, perilous desert for days with little food or water? Would you work two, even three back-breaking jobs in a new place where you don’t speak the language and many of the people don’t trust you? Would you live with the constant threat that you or your entire family could at any moment lose what you’ve managed to build and be sent back to a life with few or no options?

Many people come here seeking America’s promise of opportunity. After earning an education, people have the tools in hand to create a better life.

“On the ranches where we lived in Mexico, it is not easy,” says Ruben Robles Sr., owner of the Michoacan Market in Menlo Park and one of the people featured in the documentary *A Daring Journey*. “Many kids cannot attend school; maybe they do not have the money to pay for transportation — or food.”

In *A Daring Journey*, the Robles family and two other young men recall their terrifying journeys to the U.S., and recount harrowing memories of earning a living without documentation, the trials of fitting into a new culture, and fear of the immigration system that could shatter their dreams. Ultimately, we feel their triumph in achieving the education for which they sacrificed so much.

♦ Ruben Robles Sr. and his wife, Janet, dreamed that their children would get the education not possible living on rural farms in Mexico. Here in Menlo Park, hard work earned the Robles their Michoacan Produce Market.

“

Many kids cannot attend school; maybe they do not have the money to pay for transportation — or food.

—Ruben Robles Sr.

We follow Ruben Jr.’s five-year journey from high school senior to Vassar College graduate. As he leaves for Vassar, Janet says, “If he studies, he will not have to work like we do.”

Post-graduation, Ruben Jr. is continuing his studies to become an attorney. “I [will be able to] think of creative ways to advocate for people,” says Ruben, “and that’s what I want to do.” He believes many people with legal dif-

A DARING JOURNEY

From Immigration
to Education

INSPIRING CHANGE IS FILMMAKER'S GOAL

Menlo Park producer and director Dorothy Fadiman doesn't mince words about the intent of her latest work, **A Daring Journey**. "The undocumented tend to get lumped together with sweeping, [harsh, negative] statements," she says. We want to show that these are "real people, not statistics, but visionaries who want to contribute to their new country—some of the hardest working, most ethical people in the U.S."

The film takes an intimate look at a few people without documentation and brings them to life. For example, Ruben Sr.'s fear is palpable as he recounts his harrowing border crossing, as is Sergio's shame over a social security card dilemma. According to Dorothy, these glimpses allow the viewer to empathize with "[their] existential pain and shame."

Like **A Daring Journey**, Dorothy's other films over her 35 years of producing have centered on human rights and social justice. They have also earned her an Emmy, an Academy Award nomination, and a Gold Medal from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Dorothy believes films can inspire and motivate social change. As she says in **Producing with Passion**, a manual for independent filmmakers that she co-authored, a film that "reflects your true passion can have a lasting impact on the world."



Learn more about Concentric Media, and buy, view, or download Dorothy's films for free at: <http://concentric.org>

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ficulties find it difficult to grasp their situation. Ruben Jr. says, "As an attorney, you try to understand complex situations," then help the clients see, too.

♦ As a child fascinated with language, **Luis Bejines** dreamed of becoming a poet. When he arrived in the U.S., Luis put his love for language to immediate use learning English, then achieving two associates degrees at Foothill, in Communications and in Sociology. Next step was San Jose State, where he received a Communications B.A. In 2014, he earned his master's degree from San Francisco State. Luis is now applying to doctoral programs—and working *three* jobs. But he has already realized his childhood dream: 11 books of poetry have his name printed on the cover.

Of his arduous, multi-day trek from Mexico, Luis recalls, "My friend got his feet twisted, and he kept on limping. So I carried two backpacks all the way. But we made it through."

♦ When **Sergio Garcia** successfully prosecuted his case before the California Supreme Court, he became the first undocumented person in the U.S. to receive a law license—fulfilling his childhood dream of becoming an attorney to protect the weak and abused.

"Throughout my life, being chronically poor, I knew that the only way out—the only way to exit that poverty—was to educate myself."

Sergio overcame daunting challenges, put himself through college, and now has law offices where he helps those "disenfranchised...forgotten, and those unable to pay the high price of legal services."

In May 2015, Sergio received his "green card"—sought by many but given to very few—that identifies him as "lawful permanent resident" of the U.S.

These men now have lives rich with options. Despite life-threatening obstacles and a system that could easily destroy their families and their futures, these immigrants dreamed of—and sacrificed everything for—education.

SEE THE FILM!

Dec. 1–31

CREATIVE ARTS ONLINE
FILM FESTIVAL

www.creativeartsfilmfestival.com

Dec. 10

MONARCH FILM FESTIVAL
Pacific Grove, CA

WATCH THE TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/129826787>

Find lots more information
adaringjourneyfilm.org/articles.html

AT A GLANCE

Featured in

A DARING JOURNEY

LUIS BEJINES

Author of 11 books of poetry

Currently applying to PhD programs

[www.lulu.com/shop/](http://www.lulu.com/shop/search.ep?keyWords=Bejines&type=)

search.ep?keyWords=Bejines&type=

SERGIO GARCIA

The first undocumented person to

become a licensed attorney in the U.S.

Chico, CA office specializes in personal injury

See also the **Sergio C. Garcia Foundation**

sergiocgarcialaw.com

RUBEN ROBLES JR.

Vassar graduate

Working toward law degree

JANET and RUBEN ROBLES SR.

MICHOACAN PRODUCE MARKET

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Mesquite-Grilled Chicken!

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Around the Day Worker Center

WATCH YOUR
DOLLARS
TRANSFORM
LIVES!
**YOUR
Donation**

AT THE DAY WORKER CENTER,
WE PUT YOUR MONEY TO GOOD USE.
HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF
HOW WE STRETCH YOUR DOLLARS.

\$20

FEED 50 WORKERS

With 15 seasonal vegetable seeds
workers will harvest of 45 pounds of food.

\$65

TRAIN A WORKER FOR 8 HOURS

Just think of the number of lives you save!

\$100

DAILY OPERATIONS FOR A WEEK!

Keeps our doors open and lights on
for an entire week!

**MAIL YOUR TAX-Deductible CHECK
IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE, OR
DONATE AT OUR WEBSITE.**



EDIBLE GARDEN GROWS...WITH RECOLOGY AND LEADERSHIP MOUNTAIN VIEW

Much of the food served daily at the Center is grown right here in our own vegetable garden. Thanks to staff from Recology and a few of Leadership Mountain View's 2015 class members, our garden has expanded—by nine raised, drip-irrigated beds, to be exact. Our garden is more bountiful than ever!

Leadership Mountain View members designed the garden beds then worked alongside eight of our workers to build them, install drip irrigation, and plant vegetables — all within eight hours. Recology contributed all of the materials for the project, including the soil and compost.

Leadership Mountain View hopes that the Day Worker Center will soon profit from selling excess produce or even products made from the plants.



**Day workers and Leadership
Mountain View members
work together to assemble
9 raised beds in 8 hours!**



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I consider it a privilege to give my time to the Center. The comprehensive support and services offered here are inspiring to me, and I'm moved to do what I can to help the Center achieve its mission.

– David, volunteer

Rents from page 1

Cory was driving to his new place, the landlord called: "I have a new tenant here, with cash, who offered me \$1,000 a month more than you—plus 10 month's rent in advance. Can you match it?" Just like that, a college-educated, former professional athlete—with a fiancé and a 2-year-old—was homeless.

And the area's skyrocketing rents and tenancy issues became Cory's main focus outside of work. He believes the rental problems are fixable if local government officials decide to protect tenants.

In the meantime, Cory found a temporary housing solution for his family by using savings to buy a small, used RV. Living in the RV allows them to save money they would have spent for rent. But it's not feasible long-term, and nowhere near comfortable.

The 2015 holiday season holds new experiences for Cory. In years past, he would be decorating his house and hosting family gatherings. Instead, his days now include making sure that his fiancé has warm water for her shower and patching a leaky RV roof so that his little boy has a dry place to sleep.

♦ **Jose Vega Murillo** fears that unchecked rent increases will force his family and many other working-class people to leave the Bay Area. He worries:

Will the only affordable housing be outside of California?

Jose and his wife labor long hours to provide for their daughter, Diana. They don't want to abandon the neighborhood where she grew up and academically thrived.

A move could mean Diana would have to quit college. Since she is the first person from either side of the family to attend college, her parents agonize that her education could be interrupted or completely severed.

66

How will [those who remain here] survive without police officers, gardeners, small contractors, waiters, teachers, store clerks, firefighters...?

—*Jose Vega Murillo*

Will the hard work Jose and his family invested in their community be for nothing? He is afraid that if many working-class people are forced to move elsewhere, basic services in the Bay Area of the kind he and his wife provide would be decimated.

But Jose worries about everyone, not just his family and others like them. He is truly concerned about the people remaining here: How will they survive without police officers, gardeners, small contractors, waiters, teachers, store clerks, firefighters...?

Jose believes if strong rent stabilization advocates meet with government officials and the heads of major companies (whose salaries may be responsible for the steep increases), the area's exorbitant rent problem can be solved.



Workers and others advocate for rent control in a meeting with local government officials at Saint Joseph's Church.



Workers and Board Members Enjoy Time Together at Various Happenings....



Workers' Corner

SIGNALING LEADERSHIP: WORKERS TEACH DRIVING SKILLS TO PEERS



Making the roads safer for everyone, undocumented workers can now get a California driving license after completing education and training then passing written and road tests.

Whether you're 16 or 56, studying for the licensing exam can be an ordeal; language barriers and cultural differences make it even more nerve-wracking. Studies have shown that compañer@s learn more comfortably from their peers.

Three workers have learned how to help their peers prepare for the tough written and road tests Californians must pass to earn a driving license.

In these "train the trainer" workshops, compañer@s learn the ins and outs of driving regulations, as well as techniques to help them teach others.

More importantly, they build interpersonal skills, boosting their self-esteem.

This empowers them to become role models who will encourage and inspire others to improve themselves. What they learn in this workshop serves the trainer, the worker, and their communities, both now and in the future.

This workshop was sponsored by a grant through the Board of Supervisors, requested by Supervisor Joe Simitian.

From the Heart: Workers Donate Time and Talents

- ♦ Run for Zimbabwe Orphans & Fair at Saint Joseph's School—setting/cleaning up tables, etc.
- ♦ Art in the Park and Glorious 4th of July with Los Altos Rotary—helping good people help others!
- ♦ Cuesta Park—planting with City Trees.
- ♦ Senior Center Mountain View—teaching arts and crafts, planting vegetables.
- ♦ MidPeninsula Open Space Preserve—clearing brush and erecting fences, (twice this year!)
- ♦ Picking up trash on Mountain View streets—monthly, or even more often!

Quite often you'll find our compañer@s out in the community generously contributing their time and talents.

These are just a few of the places that received their special attention in 2015.





JUST A SAMPLING
OF THE LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES
YOUR DOLLARS
SUPPORT!

WORKERS' Classes

Learning opens doors to new jobs, new lives. As María Marroquín Says, "We prepare people to fly with their own wings."

Aside from core classes like ESL (offered in both Spanish and English), CPR, first aid, workers' safety (OSHA) and rights (ACLU), plus a variety of trade skills, here are a few of the classes offered in 2015.

- ◆ **How to Play Guitar:** taught by Board of Director Member Jeff Kellerman.
- ◆ **Yoga:** a popular meditative exercise class.
- ◆ **Electricity & Plumbing:** our kitchen contractor, Luis Rios, teaches workers the intricacies of electricity and plumbing.
- ◆ **Résumé Writing:** workers learn to polish an effective résumé.
- ◆ **Computer Skills:** browsing the web, sending email, and other skills for surviving the wired world.
- ◆ **Green Cleaning:** cleaning with environmentally friendly ingredients and procedures.
- ◆ **Food-Handling Certification:** safely prepare and store food in a commercial environment.
- ◆ **Restaurant Skills:** friend of the Center Jorge Resendiz inspires with his rise from fast-food to 4-star restaurants story, and shows how to set a table and bus dishes.
- ◆ **Water-Wise Gardening:** reducing gardening water, with a Santa Clara County master gardener.

It takes very little to underwrite a class!

You can also support us by joining our "graduates," workers, and other community volunteers who donate time and expertise to teach specific skills. (Careful, though. You may just become addicted!)

NEW KITCHEN "COOKING," THANKS TO YOU!

With the upgraded kitchen open, workers are once again enjoying "home-cooked" hot meals for breakfast and lunch. Cooking and catering skills classes will soon begin again, too. Our new kitchen would not exist without your generous, timely support. Once again, you came through for us when we most needed it!

Compañer@s put the new kitchen through its paces for the Grand Opening celebration by lovingly preparing a scrumptious feast of pupusas, enchiladas, and desserts, then served the meal to invited guests. For dinner entertainment, María Marroquín led the workers in folkloric songs and dances. After, some of the workers' children helped María present appreciation certificates and T-shirts to the volunteers.



Volunteer Kathie Franger and kitchen contractor Luis Rios cut the ribbon to unveil the Center's beautiful new commercial kitchen at the Grand Opening and Volunteer Appreciation Party on September 10. After the ceremony, guests toured the sparkling new facilities and dined on a feast the workers cooked in the new facilities.



STEERING INTO THE FUTURE

As the Center approaches its 20th year of serving the community, its board of directors met for a day-long strategic planning retreat to hammer out the Center's mission statement for the next five to ten years.

Flowing from the Day Worker Center's mission (our values, beliefs, and what we hope to achieve in the community), are the specific goals and objectives to help us stay the course.

The strategic planning process requires a high level of commitment from board members. Says Executive Director María Marroquín, "We are fortunate to have an extremely diverse group of people serving on our board of directors, each member committed to helping us carry out our mission." Of the planning process she says, "By setting this clear course toward the future, we ensure that we continue grow."

A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Magic of Community



This year brought the Center scores of new employers to join those who regularly hire workers. Compared to 2014, this resulted in 11 more workers per day finding some type of paying job. (On average, we placed 52 workers a day in FY 2015.) But we are so much more than an employer-worker connection service!

Through the tremendous perseverance of workers, staff, and board members, and the generously donated talents of dedicated volunteers (nearly 9,000 hours—that we could count!), the Center magically transforms into a community.

The workers, too, are transformed by that magic. They arrive seeking a warm, dry place to look for work. They find a range of classes to hone their job and life skills, help to understand and pursue their rights and responsibilities in a new country, as well as access to free health and legal services.

Even more basically for the newly arrived immigrant who is alone and does not speak the language, s/he finds a steaming cup of coffee on a cold morning and friends to share it with.

Soon, much like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, the *compañero* discovers that s/he, too, has been transformed.

The vital link in that metamorphosis is your amazing support for which we are eternally grateful.

—María Marroquín

CREATING A NETWORK FOR CHANGE: MARÍA COMPLETES ROCKWOOD LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Gandhi proclaimed, "We must be the change we want to see in the world." Putting those words into action, Rockwood Leadership Institute holds training programs for the heads of non-profits, like the intensive, 10-month "Developing Leaders of Immigrant Communities" Executive Director María Marroquín just completed.



As one of the 2014–15 "Fellows for a New California" María attended several multi-day retreats where she built strong partnerships with about 20 other leaders throughout the state. The process proved productive, as María crafted new, compelling visions for the Center, and learned to deal more effectively with leadership and organizational challenges.

María believes the Rockwood training powerfully transformed her purpose, vision, resilience, and performance. But she says, "the most remarkable experience was to share and strengthen dreams with my super-wonderful fellows."

“

I've been in this country for 14 years and never had the opportunity to take English classes until I came to the Center... [where], when we're not working, we're studying and learning. Now, one of my children is graduating from high school and one is attending university. They are living the opportunity that coming here [gave] them.

I'm very grateful for that.

All we want is an opportunity.

—anonymous *compañero*



113 ESCUELA AVENUE
MOUNTAIN VIEW CA 94040

650.903.4102

OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2016!

Next year marks our 20th year as a community center connecting employers and workers.

Watch your email and our web site for announcements of celebratory events!