



LABOR

Upcoming Events!

Special Thanks to our supporters! The Buck Foundation, The Chinook Fund, The Public Welfare Foundation, The Wolcott Family Foundation, Bread For the Journey, First Data/Western Union Foundation, The Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado, Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado, The City and County of Denver, Denver Outreach Center and the American Friends Service Committee

First year anniversary party coming soon! On August 2 at 1:00 P.M., El Centro will celebrate its first anniversary with a big party at the Center. A film about our workers' center, music, food and a silent auction will be provided. Please, come and support our workers' center.

Workers create their own construction classes !!

El Centro's workers are in the process of creating a series of construction classes with donated tools to help workers learn more skills. If you would like to donate any tools, please contact El Centro.

El Centro Humanitario para los Trabajadores

2260 California Ave.
Denver, Colorado 80205
Fax: 303.291.2109
Telephone: 303.292.4115

Welcome to the first edition of "LABOR"

It is with much pride and excitement that we publish the first issue of "Labor," the first newsletter by and for *nuestro barrio*. This monthly paper will feature stories of interest to all immigrant day laborers in the Denver metro area. We will publish news and stories about these workers and immigrants in general. Also, we will highlight upcoming events and activities. Finally, we will publish opinion articles from anyone willing to submit their thoughts.



News, in Brief:

Centro Marches at Cesar Chavez Rally!!! On March 31st, several Centro workers, staff, and volunteers marched in honor of Denver's Cesar Chavez holiday, recognizing one of the greatest civil rights leaders of the last century. The March went well, as Centro staff met with local politicians and mayoral candidates.

Centro Workers Help Denver Dig Out!! During the snowstorms in March, over 30 workers helped Denver cope with the intense blizzard.

Web Site Almost Up! By the end of this Month, El Centro will have its very own internet web site up and running. This site will help El Centro advertise to the public, and will result in more contractors visiting the site to look for workers.

Centro Volunteers go to Washington!! Last fall, five representatives from El Centro went to Washington D.C. to participate in the second annual National Day Labor Organizing Conference. In Washington, Centro workers met with workers from cities all across the United States. Workers also visited with national politicians to try to promote legislation to improve the lives of workers and immigrants throughout the country. (Unfortunately, when we got to Congressman Tancredo's office, he slipped out the back door to avoid us!!)

Story of a Day Laborer

This is the first of several narratives that were gathered during a writing workshop offered as part of a Community-Based Research effort of the College of Education at the University of Denver.

I am a common human being and Mexican by birth. I also am 40 years of age, married with three daughters,

Mexican also, thanks to God. I have shared the past 6 years with my wife with whom I have made 3 beautiful children, Claudia, Adriana, Gaii—my treasures—4, 2, 8 months of age respectively. They are the memories that come to mind when I think of the home that I left behind me in México. It is for them that

I keep moving.

I wanted to express in these lines that which I feel at this moment of my life. I arrived in this state by accident. Originally my destination was NY. But for lack of money to buy my passage, I ended up here in a city unknown to me, but for which I have both

Story of a Day Laborer (continued from pg. 1)

respect and fear. Respect because all the world moves ahead in spite of the difficulty of doing it. Fear because I see the demanding strategies that many people must use to cover their necessities.

Trying to find work and obtain the money for my passage has become an odyssey.

I feel left out and I am unable able to provide my family a worthy way to live.

I have become very depressed and really

Trying to find work and obtain the money for my passage has become an odyssey.

want to return to my country. But I cannot provide for the needs of my family there, thus I feel forced to be where I do not want to be, to eat what I do not want to eat, to sleep in a place that is dirty and depressing to me and

where I do not have the facilities of being able to bathe and to clean up properly. For me these are reasons why I do not feel confident of being able to maintain communication with normal people and this makes me feel inferior to others. In so many words, I am not feeling happy. But I maintain the hope of finding good work and saving a

sufficient amount to return to México and to finish my life with the family that I adore and miss with all my soul.

I want to have time to play with my daughters, my dogs and my wife. I hope that God wills it.

— G.

Director's Message

Welcome to El Centro! Home for Immigrant Day Laborers

They are the poorest of the poor, gathering every day on a northeast Denver street corner to seek work so that they may survive and send money to their families. They are Denver's immigrant day laborers, who have fled desperate poverty south of the border. They provide Denver with some of its most back-breaking work, often working for minuscule wages and under dangerous conditions. For years, these immigrants have lived and worked off the street corner, without shelter in the scorching sun or chilling cold, without protection from unscrupulous employers who sometimes refuse to pay wages, and without access to bathrooms, water or telephones. But recently, things have changed for the better as workers have joined with community advocates to lease an old warehouse at 2260 California street, where the "El Centro Humanitario Para Los Trabajadores" opened its doors on June 1, 2002.

Affectionately known as "El Centro" among the day laborers, the "Humanitarian Center for Workers" operates with a mission to

provide immigrant day laborers with a safe and dignified gathering place to seek employment and to provide workers with cultural and leadership programs. Spearheaded by the American Friends Service Committee, El Centro has been supported by a wide range of community groups, churches, and city officials. Members from these groups, together with street workers, spent weeks of volunteer labor repairing and repainting the site, and the excitement was palpable on June 1, when the garage door rolled up at 6:00 a.m., and El Centro opened its doors to business. For the first time, workers had a place to gather and await jobs, employers had a safe place to meet and hire workers, and Denver residents had a solution to the crisis of the street-corner labor market.

What is our business at El Centro? When hard-working, but homeless, workers seek a bit of respite, it is El Centro's business to welcome them with

a place to rest, with refreshments, and with a bathroom. When "Miguel" suffered permanent nerve damage to his arm at an unsafe construction site, and was ignored by his employer, El Centro's business was to insure

They are the poorest of the poor, gathering every day on a northeast Denver street corner to seek work so that they may survive and send money to their families

that Miguel received an adequate personal injury award so that he could rebuild his life. When "Roberto" worked for four days straight, and then was stiffed by his unscrupulous employer, El Centro's job was to provide advocacy and wage claim services so that Roberto received his pay. When "Jose" experienced a life-threatening rupture of his appendix, it was El Centro's business to secure medical attention and to insure that his family back in Mexico was aware of the situation. When area residents and business complain of an unsavory street scene as immigrant gather on the corner seeking jobs, it is Centro's job to develop solutions, to give workers a place to gather off the street, and to foster healthy dialogue between area resi-

dents and the street community. El Centro is home to all these workers, and there is no other place in Denver quite like it.

—Minsun Ji

Programs of El Centro

Jobs!!! Every day, many workers find employment by using El Centro's services. As summer approaches and the weather gets better, more and more employers are coming to use the center to hire good workers.

English Classes: Almost every day, El Centro offers English Classes. Sessions cover everything from grammar to job vocabulary to conversational English. Classes are offered free. Also, people are encouraged to use El Centro's growing library to learn at their own pace. For more information (or if your interested in helping teach), come by the center and talk with Javier.

Legal Services: Every Monday, El Centro hosts a legal clinic to address the legal needs of immigrant workers in the community. The Clinic is run in conjunction with the University of Denver College of Law. If you're having problems getting paid or have other legal concerns, stop by and talk with law students and attorneys to know your rights!