THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"The Worker Center Movement": Reimagining Organizing and Policy for Chicago's Migrant Workers

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Abstract

Migrants represent a growing proportion of workers in the United States. Because they lack legal status, migrant workers are uniquely vulnerable to exploitation. The needs of migrant workers are different from their native-born counterparts and existing labor infrastructure is not well equipped to support them. In the past two decades, non-profit worker centers have sprung up across the country to support migrant workers directly. In this paper, I assess the role of worker centers by examining a notably successful action by El Milagro Tortilla Factory workers, which occurred with the support of the Arise Chicago Worker Center. Over three months, I conducted four interviews with Arise Chicago organizers and five interviews with employees of the El Milagro Tortilla Factory, many of whom are undocumented. My findings illustrate the barriers to organizing migrant workers, how worker centers break down these barriers, and the impact of organizing on empowering migrant workers as rights-holding community members, despite lacking legal status in the U.S. Based on these findings, I provide policy recommendations for the City of Chicago to include worker center organizers in decision-making and protect migrant workers like those at El Milagro. Only by understanding the needs of migrant workers and how they engage with worker centers can the labor movement adapt and protect workers in the new labor landscape.

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Introduction

This is Daniel's 20th year working at one of two of El Milagro's tortilla factory locations on the west side of Chicago.[1] In total, El Milagro operates four tortilla factories and several restaurants in and around the City of Chicago. While grateful for the work, over the past few years Daniel has found himself increasingly frustrated by the working conditions and unlivable wages at the 21st Street factory. In late summer of 2021, an outbreak of COVID-19 swept through the plant, leaving five workers dead and infecting many more. For five weeks following the outbreak, Daniel and his coworkers were sent home to quarantine. Stuck at home, Daniel watched television and browsed Facebook. There, he discovered that a group of workers at El Milagro's 36th Street factory had successfully organized for a wage increase.

When Daniel returned to work, he started talking with his coworkers who had also heard about the raises at the 36th Street factory. Soon, Daniel and a handful of other workers decided that they too wanted to organize. Recalling the Facebook posts he'd seen, Daniel reached out to Jorge Mujica, a well-known labor organizer in Chicago. Mujica works at a West Loop non-profit called Arise Chicago Worker Center. He told Daniel and his coworkers to gather as many people as they could for a meeting with himself and two other Arise Chicago organizers, Jose Uribe and Laura Garza, who is also the director of the center. The next week, 32 El Milagro workers gathered in a park in Little Village in the evening, between the end of the day shift and the start of the night. They told the Arise Chicago organizers about the conditions at their factory: new employees being brought on with higher pay than those who had been at the factory for more than 20 years, having to bring their own safety equipment and tools to fix machines, sexual harassment on the job, never receiving sick leave, sudden shift-schedule changes, and regularly having to work 12-to-14-hour

[1] All names of workers have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

days. They had had enough and were ready to organize. Since then, the workers' campaign has continued to grow, from a coalition of 32 to 130 workers at Daniel's factory alone. While they have made impressive strides, including raises and mandatory sexual harassment trainings, El Milagro workers in Chicago continue to organize for improved conditions and pay with support from Arise Chicago.

Worker centers like Arise Chicago have sprung up rapidly in the 21st century and have had great success protecting the rights of workers. Based in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood, Arise Chicago was founded in 2002 and has since helped workers recover more than $8.3 million in wages and compensation ("About" n.d.). The expansion of worker centers mirrors new challenges faced by the labor movement over the same timeframe. Specifically, industrialized nations have increasingly relied on migrant labor while unions have not adapted to support them. It was not until 2000 that the AFL-CIO, the national federation of unions in the US, dropped its anti-immigration stance after years of advocacy by migrant labor organizers and activists (Johnston 2000: 156). Still, xenophobia coupled with the unique challenges involved in organizing migrant workers result in a continued separation between migrant and native workers. So, worker centers have grown to support migrant workers directly.

The need for worker centers indicates a fragmentation of the contemporary labor movement. Today, many scholars point to the relationship between citizenship and labor to offer a new theoretical framework for the labor movement (Bosniak 2002; Johnston 2000). "Citizenship" is not purely a legal phenomenon but also refers to a level of self-governance and entitlement to rights, both of which exist in the economic and social spheres as much as the political. For example, by participating in community activism and leadership, individuals exert influence over their governance and claim citizenship. Viewing the labor movement as a

citizenship movement not only offers a way to understand how labor and citizenship are intertwined but also helps conceive of worker centers and unions as part of the same unified movement.

Given the increasing reliance on migrant labor in the US, labor policy must adapt to meet the needs of migrant workers to remain relevant for low-wage workers overall (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022). My thesis will contribute to existing literature on worker centers in the labor movement through a case study of Arise Chicago. I begin by examining the worker center movement in Chicago within the context of the broader labor and immigration efforts in the city. Then, I provide an account of existing research and describe my own interview process. Drawing from nine interviews I conducted over the course of three months with Arise Chicago organizers and El Milagro workers, I then offer insight into worker perspectives, the positionality of the worker center, and the relationship between the El Milagro movement and citizenship. Finally, I use my findings to suggest city-level policy changes that integrate the voices of worker center organizers into policy making and implementation.

Exclusion of Migrant Workers from Traditional Labor Infrastructure

Race as a Challenge to Labor Organizing in Chicago

Chicago, the third largest city in the US, has a long history of immigration. Before 1950, most immigrants arrived from Europe. Though Mexicans began migrating to Chicago as early as 1884, a wave of large-scale deportations during the Great Depression known as the "repatriation movement" dramatically reduced the number of Mexican immigrants in the city (Pacyga 2009: 389). In 1942, following the Bracero Agreements between the Mexican and US governments, the Mexican immigrant population once again rose in Chicago as workers were recruited to support the US war effort. Then in 1965, the immigration reform known as the Immigration and Nationality

Act was passed, paving the way for another rise in immigration from Mexico, as well as from Central and South America (Chishti, Hipsman, and Ball 2015). By 2004, Mexican immigrants accounted for more than 40% of all foreign-born people in the Chicago area (Pacyga 2009: 390).

As of the 2020 census, Latino residents constitute nearly a third of the city's total population (Serrato et al 2022). Given the city's stark history of racial segregation, migrants have generally settled in enclaves. With the wave of immigration in the 1970s and 1980s, Mexican migrants began moving into the Little Village neighborhood, formerly known as "Czech California" because of the large number of Czech immigrants living there (Pacyga 2009: 391). Today, a significant proportion of the approximately 800,000 Latino residents in the city live in Little Village and the adjacent Pilsen neighborhood on Chicago's Southwest side (Serrato et al 2022). An archway at the eastern entrance of Little Village on 26th Street now reads a sign in Spanish, "Bienvenidos a Little Village" ("Welcome to Little Village," in English).

Segregation and tension between racial groups in Chicago have posed a challenge to building effective industry-wide labor coalitions. Along with Black workers who came to northern cities from the American South beginning in the 1910s, early Mexican immigrants to Chicago were used as strikebreakers by employers, particularly in steel mills (Serrato et al 2022). Further, the interests of Black workers have been repeatedly pitted against those of immigrants of color, complicating immigrant-focused labor organizing in areas with large Black populations like Chicago (Cook 2016; Johnson et al 1997). In city politics, there have been no effective multi-racial electoral coalitions since the 1980s. Political divisions exacerbate the challenges involved in forming racially diverse labor rights coalitions in the city (Graauw et al 2020: 739).

The Growth of the Migrant Workforce

The demand for migrant workers in the US has been theorized as an economic necessity. Scholars assert that reliance on migrant workers is unavoidable in industrial economies (Piore 1979; Haas et al 2020: 278). Nonetheless, the large wave of migration from Mexico following the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was largely unexpected by US policymakers at the time. The US and other industrialized countries had begun outsourcing manufacturing work in a period of rapid neoliberal globalization beginning in the late 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, industrialized countries were confronted with the reality that certain sectors such as food service, construction, and domestic work could not be exported (Haas et al 2020: 279). Yet, historic sources of labor for these sectors were domestically depleted by the simultaneous expansion of women's participation in the formal labor market and higher educational attainment. Many jobs in these sectors were increasingly regarded as "low-status" careers such that people from middle- and upper-class families would choose not to work instead of taking these jobs (Piore 1979). Motivated by social and economic demands, and enabled by the 1965 immigration policy reform, non-exportable sectors began recruiting from abroad to bring in workers.

Since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, migrants have continued to be recruited and come to the US in search of jobs through both legal and illegal channels. In 2021, both documented and undocumented immigrants made up approximately 17% of the total US civilian labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022). Still, foreign-born workers are primarily employed in "low-status" sectors and positions that do not require high educational attainment. These sectors include service, construction, and production (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022). Today, approximately 19% of foreign-born workers ages 25 and older have not completed high school, compared with only 3.5% of native-born workers. Further, the median weekly earnings of

foreign-born workers were only approximately 88% of the median for native-born workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022). As a result, scholars maintain that the jobs done by immigrants would not otherwise be held by native-born workers, driving continued reliance on the migrant workforce within the US (Haas et al 2020; Sassen 1988).

The effect of migration on wages and conditions for native-born workers has remained at the forefront of political discussion. While the exact impact of immigration on conditions for native-born workers remains contentious, economic scholarship suggests that the wage effect of immigration, whether positive or negative, is decidedly small (Dustmann et al 2016; Ottavio and Peri 2011). Nonetheless, public concern over the impact of migrant workers continues to be raised within ongoing culturally and often racially motivated debates over the nation's identity (Chishti et al 2015).

Exclusion of Migrant Workers from Labor Unions

Throughout the 20th century and into the present day, unions nationwide have grappled with whether and how to include migrant workers. With the offshoring of manufacturing jobs, manufacturing sector unions lost members and bargaining power. Meanwhile the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) began organizing migrant workers and gained influence, particularly with the Justice for Janitors movement of the early 1990s. Under mounting pressure from immigrant labor organizers and community leaders, other unions have more recently begun advocating for the rights of migrant workers. From its founding in 1955 through 2000, the AFL-CIO, the national federation of unions, remained supportive of anti-immigrant legislation, fearing negative consequences of migrant workers on the working conditions of native-born workers. It was not until 2000 under then-President John Sweeney that the AFL-CIO officially embraced migrant workers and reversed its longstanding policy of supporting sanctions against employers

who hire undocumented workers (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Johnston 2000: 156). Pressured by then-Vice President of the SEIU and Mexican American activist Eliseo Medina, the AFL-CIO also announced a call for amnesty for all 6 million undocumented workers in the US. Beyond a push toward inclusivity, the decision of the AFL-CIO has been further understood as a response to declining membership and recognition of the need to organize immigrants to maintain the labor movement overall, as migrant workers continue to join the domestic workforce (Johnston 2000: 155).

Pressured by immigrant-led organizing and advocacy, labor organizations in Chicago have also come a long way on immigration. The Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) is the umbrella organization for labor unions in Cook County, which includes Chicago and surrounding municipalities. Scholarship on the history of the CFL and the relationships between Chicago unions and Latino migrant workers suggest that although unions have taken steps toward inclusivity, a lack of diversity in union leadership and xenophobia among members prevent unions from fully and effectively building immigrant coalitions (Fletcher and Gapasin 2008). As a result, unions turn to immigrant rights community organizations such as the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) for legitimacy within immigrant communities (Graauw et al 2020: 738). Movements built on coordination between unions and immigrant rights organizations have successfully fought for legislation that protects the rights of migrant workers. Still, the organizations supporting Latino immigrants in Chicago have limited resources, which hinders their capacity for effective advocacy, even with union support (Levin and McKean 2009).

Casualization of Labor and the Disproportionate Effect on Mmigrant Jobs

With increasingly globalized production, the domestic labor economy has been restructured and wage-worker jobs have become non-permanent positions (Ness 2005: 22). Unlike

permanent employees, independent contractors, employees of temp agencies, and other informally employed workers are not protected by hour limits or minimum wage requirements ("Decent Work and the Informal Economy" 2002). As such, these 'precarious employees' are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Theorists argue that the informal economy and the challenges that this so-called casualization creates for workers are becoming permanent features of industrialized economies (Haas et al 2020: 288; Portes et al 1989: 11).

Studies of the relationship between the casualization of labor and the influx of migrant workers in the US have revealed that migrants, particularly undocumented migrants, are more likely to hold informal positions. This is largely because casualization has predominantly impacted the low-status jobs often filled by migrant workers (Haas et al 2020: 287; Sassen 1988). The informal sector and independent contractor positions are characterized by a lack of employer oversight, which also enables migrant workers without citizenship status to remain unnoticed. With the expansion of the informal sector and the casualization of their jobs, migrants are pushed further outside the realm of labor law protection.

Informal workers are not only denied rights and protections, but also do not have access to traditional collective bargaining agreements. Since the relationship between employer and employees in the informal sector is often unclear or obscured by informal contracts and chains of subcontractors, workers in the informal sector are far less likely to know how and to whom to make demands for better working conditions. Even when the employment relationship is clear, contract employees often work in small workplaces or by themselves and hold multiple jobs at the same time, complicating organizing efforts. Only in the 21st century have trade unions begun rising to the challenge of organizing workers in the growing informal economy (Bonner and Spooner 2011: 88-91).

The Worker Center as a Response to Migrant Exclusion

Worker centers have risen in prominence in the past few decades. In 1992, there were little more than five worker centers in the United States. By 2005, there were more than 139 centers across 80 cities, towns, and rural areas. (Fine 2006: 421). Most recent estimates conclude that there are now more than 200 worker centers nationwide (Kader 2020: 8). In Chicago alone, there are six worker centers across different neighborhoods, including Arise Chicago in the West Loop ("Raise the Floor Alliance" n.d.). The expansion of the worker center framework across the country, called the "worker center movement," is seen as part of the response of the labor movement to neoliberal globalization. Worker centers are specifically geared toward supporting migrant workers who are uniquely vulnerable to exploitation and the denial of labor rights. Though traditional unions have become more inclusive and considerate of the unique needs of migrant workers in the past twenty years – a result of efforts led by immigrant labor activists – a growing number of migrant workers rely on worker centers instead to protect their rights.

Worker centers are community-led organizations that provide services and advocate for low-wage workers, particularly immigrants. Worker centers have elements of service agencies, social movement organizations, community centers, and traditional unions. They meet worker needs through a combination of accessible educational and legal services and labor and policy advocacy. Further, worker centers build upon ethnic, racial, and geographic solidarity to build worker cohesion, as opposed to unions which focus on organizing individual worksites and industries (Fine 2006: 427). Worker centers also engage in coalition-building with other community organizations, especially faith-based groups. Arise Chicago, for example, began as a faith-based project with the goal of connecting underrepresented workers to services provided by religious leaders in the Chicago area. Finally, worker centers often work with unions, translating

between migrant workers and union leaders and ensuring that the unique needs of migrants in the workplace are met (Pallares and Flores-González 2010).

Worker centers are more accessible for migrant workers than traditional unions because they are community based and often immigrant-led, with ties to immigrant community leaders and local faith-based centers. In this way, worker centers are woven into the cultural and social fabric of immigrant communities (Fine 2006: 420). As community institutions, worker centers more effectively gain the trust of low-wage migrant workers who are generally more vulnerable and harder to reach than other workers (Bonner and Spooner: 91). This place-based model also allows worker centers to support workers in even the most informal sectors. This includes street vendors and others whose work puts them in direct competition with one another, for whom the traditional collective bargaining framework is ill-equipped to support (Bonner and Spooner 2011: 89).

Most worker centers focus on empowering and educating workers to take their own actions as opposed to acting on their behalf. This enables worker centers to operate without as large of a staff or as many resources as traditional unions, such that most worker centers do not have to collect dues or mandate membership (Kader 2020: 10). Even the lowest-wage workers can therefore access and participate in educational programming and community events (Bonner and Spooner 2011: 90). Without dues collection or standardized membership requirements, however, there are also concerns about worker centers' inability to build formal organizational power and raise sufficient funds for self-sustainability. With very minimal staff and few official members, worker centers generally rely largely on foundation grants and support to offer services and pay staff (Fine 2006: 444). As a result, there is contention over the extent to which the worker center model will be able to scale up and meet the requirements of their growing role within the labor movement (Kader 2020: 11; Fine 2006: 456).

Toward Inclusion: Reimagining the 21st Century Labor Movement

The Labor Movement as a Citizenship Movement

The worker center movement represents a new approach within the national labor movement, with new strategies emerging to support different types of workers. To understand the contemporary labor movement, many scholars have framed labor advocacy as a method of expanding access to citizenship. The relationship between labor advocacy and citizenship is implicit in the various ways in which citizenship is defined. For example, we use the term citizenship to describe the enjoyment of rights when we compare the status of "equal citizens" with "second-class citizens" (Bosniak 2002: 500). In this conception, people with minority identities (such as LGBTQ+ or racial minority identities) are relegated to second-class citizenship meaning that they are not accepted into the political and social spheres that enable equal citizenship. To attain equal citizenship, people need access to politics and society, including decent work (Bosniak 2002: 501). Thus, decent work is a necessary requirement to the fulfillment of equal citizenship.

Citizenship also can refer to the idea of self-governance and political engagement. Here, as opposed to equal and second-class citizenship, the distinction is between so-called "good citizens" and passive or uninvolved individuals. Labor theorists often draw the idea of good citizenship into the workplace to refer to self-governance in the workplace or worker commitment and participation in leadership on the job. That is, good citizenship is extended beyond mere participation in the political sphere but also extends to the economy and the workplace (Bosniak 2002: 503).

Beyond the legal definition, 'citizenship' implies a level of political and economic participation and access to rights. In this way, labor organizing and worker empowerment can be

understood as a form of citizenship attainment even for non-citizens (Bosniak 2002: 506). Understanding labor as a citizenship movement provides a framework through which to understand how labor and citizenship are intertwined.

Drawing upon the relationship between labor and citizenship, theorists also point to the way in which citizenship movement theory can offer new ways of conceptualizing the 21st century labor movement. Diversity, whether across languages, citizenship statuses, geographic regions, industries, levels of formality, or racial identities, has become a key challenge to the advancement of a cohesive national labor movement. Seeing labor as a citizenship movement offers a throughline across all labor efforts and thus creates an opportunity for collective strategizing. In other words, as Johnston puts it, "[d]espite this diversity, the variety of labor movements emerging in each of these circumstances all seek to defend, exercise, and extend the boundaries of citizenship" (2000: 144). Reimagining the labor movement as a citizenship movement recognizes unique local strategies for protecting the rights of workers and the need for social and legal change, in addition to a purely economic worker movement (Johnston 2000: 145).

Strategies to Protect Migrant Workers

Given the often-turbulent history of labor and immigration movements, many scholars have investigated the way in which labor and citizenship are intertwined and how the ideologies of these movements can be unified (Bosniak 2002; Johnston 2000). In the years following the decision of the AFL-CIO decision to adopt a pro-immigration stance, scholarship identified ways in which unions have begun incorporating immigrant rights advocacy into their own agendas (Graauw et al 2020). This has been especially relevant at the state and city levels, since local context and politics have been shown to impact union organizing tactics and relationships with immigrant's rights groups (Graauw et al 2020: 742). Further, city-level policymakers can develop

and implement pro-immigration policies even when national sentiment is anti-immigrant (Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). So, in collaboration with unions in cities, immigrant rights organizations can successfully protect local non-citizens.

At the same time, scholars have focused on identifying the ways in which migrants have and continue to organize themselves outside of the traditional union framework, particularly in response to ongoing xenophobia and barriers to inclusion (Fletcher and Gapasin 2008). In addition to studies of the impressive history of immigrant participation and leadership in union efforts, many others have identified worker centers as the primary sites of migrant worker organizing in recent decades (Lesniewski and Canon 2016; Greenhouse 2015; Bonner and Spooner 2011). Scholarship on the worker center movement has focused on identifying how they differ from labor unions and have made strides toward assessing their role within the broader labor movement (Kader 2020; Fine 2006). The theoretical framework relating citizenship and labor also represents a major development toward grappling with the 21st century labor movement and the new needs of workers overall.

Even so, there have been few in-depth studies directly focused on worker centers and their role in shaping the labor movement. Further, the perspectives of migrant workers relying on worker centers have continued to be ignored and the usefulness of worker centers taken for granted. Only through grappling with the ways in which these centers are important for the workers they serve can we understand their true impact on the broader labor movement.

Building on existing theoretical frameworks and analysis of worker centers, I provide a qualitative analysis of workers seeking support from Arise Chicago as a case study for the role of worker centers in labor organizing. Identifying worker perspectives is not only relevant to the role of the worker center in the labor movement, but also provides opportunities to define policies that

support migrant workers more directly. As such, I analyze my findings in the context of the new labor-citizenship movement in Chicago. Furthermore, focusing on the local-context, I use my conclusions to propose to meet the needs of migrant workers. Through interviews, I address the following two questions: Why do migrant workers rely on worker centers? And how should policymakers respond to the changing labor landscape, according to worker center leaders and members?

Inside the Arise Chicago Worker Center

To answer these questions, I traveled to Arise Chicago Worker Center in the West Loop on several occasions over the course of three months. I was put in touch with a few members of the worker center's staff through a university connection. At each meeting, I sat down with multiple Arise Chicago organizers and with El Milagro workers who are members of or work closely with the worker center. I also met with workers via Zoom, when coordinating via Arise Chicago was not feasible. The organization's West Loop headquarters occupy the second floor of a building in the Kinzie Industrial Center of Chicago, surrounded by warehouses recently converted into office spaces. Inside, staff member desks are arranged around a large meeting space at the center. Here and in churches nearby, Arise Chicago organizers host open community meetings for low-wage workers and migrants each month. I met with staff members in an unused office space with a small round table located opposite the conference room.

Random sampling was not feasible since worker information is private. As a result, I chose snowball-sampled qualitative interviews as the primary data source in my research. Unlike quantitative studies which rely on random sampling to meet the conditions of statistical analysis, qualitative study designs are designed purposively. In this case, my goal is to gather the perspectives of workers who engage with worker centers to define challenges impacting workers

and inform effective policy to support them. I also assumed before beginning interviews that worker perspectives would vary widely based on certain factors including citizenship status, age, and family economic status. Focusing on conducting thorough interviews with fewer and most willing workers is preferred purposively to quantitative data. In-depth interviews provide deeper and individual understanding of worker experiences and perspectives. Interviews also allow for the incorporation of context and theory both methodologically and with the descriptive data.

I spoke with individuals who were most willing and available. In our first meeting, worker center organizers encouraged me to connect with workers and gain their perspectives directly to inform my research. I relied on organizers and workers I had already met to connect me with other workers I could interview. In total, I conducted four interviews with organizers and five interviews with El Milagro workers. Because of the nature of this convenience sample, I do not assume that the experiences and perspectives of the workers I spoke with on worker centers are representative of all workers. However, I do rely on responses of worker center organizers and workers alike to define and assess at least some of the hurdles that impact migrant workers who are seeking support from worker centers in Chicago. I also use worker experiences and stories from staff members to identify reasons why workers in Chicago may choose to get involved with worker centers in the first place.

To highlight common challenges and experiences of workers, I chose to keep interviews largely formulaic and consistent. I asked El Milagro workers the same set of broad questions. I chose the following four questions to examine their relationship with Arise Chicago, the role of worker centers, and challenges faced by workers:

- How did you get involved with Arise Chicago?
- How have you relied on Arise Chicago?

- How have you learned about your labor rights?
- What is something you think is important for other workers to know?

All the interviews with workers were conducted in Spanish, using the same template. Within this structure, I also asked follow-up questions based on their answers. Interviews lasted 20 minutes on average.

For the protection of organizers and workers, particularly worker relationships with their employers, I only recorded qualitative interviews with permission and did not record the real names of workers anywhere in my data. For this reason, I do not include worker names and refer to organizers by their real names only with explicit permission. Otherwise, I use pseudonyms. In instances where recording was not possible, I relied on notetaking during and immediately after the interviews to represent worker perspectives. All quotes from worker interviews are translations from Spanish done to the best of my ability. Direct quotes in Spanish are included in the appendix.

The El Milagro Movement

"From Another World": Disconnect Between Workers and Native-Born Community

El Milagro workers were largely unaware of their rights prior to getting involved with Arise Chicago. Still, given the centrality of the law to their lives, workers I spoke with from El Milagro were uniquely concerned about violating the law. The law is much more proximate to the lives and wellbeing of migrant workers because of the immense legal risks they take on by being in the US. Without permanent status and in some cases without any legal status, beyond concerns about losing their jobs, migrant workers also fear deportation if they organize against their employer for better conditions. Despite their concerns about violating the law, workers first learned about their legal rights from Arise Chicago. A worker from El Milagro, Gabriel, explained that in the first workshop with Arise Chicago, "everything was new for me and for all my coworkers." By teaching workers

their rights and reassuring them that their actions were legal, Arise Chicago helped launch the worker-led movement at El Milagro.

Migrants to the US are often only familiar with the labor laws and history of organizing in their countries of origin. Once in the US, they are often segregated from the rest of the communities in which they work. Migrants from Mexico to Chicago, for instance, most often reside in neighborhoods with other Mexican immigrants such as Little Village and Pilsen, where two of El Milagro's factories and their restaurants are located. As a result, migrants continue to rely on information shared within communities of people from the same home countries rather than learning from native citizens and workers. While he had lived in the US for nearly 20 years, Daniel told me, "I had heard in Mexico of strikes that in a moment became illegal. And so, I didn't want to do something illegal because that would create a new problem." When considering speaking up about the poor working conditions he and his coworkers endured, Daniel turned to his prior knowledge from labor movements in Mexico, where he grew up, rather than movements in the US. Until he reached out to Arise and gained their support, Daniel feared unintentionally breaking US law because he did not know what the law was.

For Alejandro, another El Milagro worker I spoke with, his unfamiliarity with US labor law was also caused by the fact that he had changed sectors from petroleum in Colombia to food service in the US. He told me, "I come from working in the petroleum sector in Colombia, and there the [job] security issue is very big and the issue of labor law is very, very important, because it weighs heavily on everything…I was the boss then so I had more training on that." In Colombia, he had learned about labor law because of his position and felt confident that he would be able to transfer his knowledge to working in the US. However, upon his arrival he found the first job he could and ended up in the food service sector: "It turns out that I arrived from [Colombia] to work

at a food company where [job] security is minimal…and they do any number of things wrong to you." While Alejandro felt his treatment on the job was "wrong," he did not have the time or necessary knowledge about how to assert his rights until Arise Chicago presented him with the information and resources to do so.

Like the segregation of migrants into specific neighborhoods, exploitation at work can contribute to the alientation migrants feel from the communities in which they work. Alejandro explained, "I am from Colombia. I come from another, from another world. So, I thought that the United States would be good for us from third world countries, as we are told. They are wrong, because it turns out that workwise we are much better off than here…" Alejandro's experience of being in the US was not what he expected. He felt tricked by the perceptions of American workers he was exposed to in Colombia and consequently disenfranchised by the country in which he now lives. After his experience at El Milagro, Alejandro remarked that in the US, "in general, you don't have the right to anything."

"We Heard a Rumor": Information Sharing Between Workers

The impetuous for the 21st Street workers to overcome their concerns about organizing were the raises received by workers at the 36th Street El Milagro plant. Daniel explained, "We heard a rumor that our coworkers at the other plant had received $1 raises." As Arise Chicago organizer Laura Garza also explained, many of the workers at the El Milagro factories and restaurants have family members who work at a different location, facilitating information sharing between employees: "We [were] getting a call from the 21st Street Plant [saying] 'We heard this is happening. My sister works here'…everybody talks to each other." By word-of-mouth information sharing within the migrant community, workers at El Milagro began seeing the legitimacy of their complaints against their employer and a path forward.

The El Milagro workers also took advantage of social media to share information. On Facebook during quarantine, Daniel learned more about the movement started by his coworkers at the 36th Street plant and the role Arise Chicago organizer and activist Jorge Mujica took in supporting them. At the time, Daniel explained to me that he had not known about Arise Chicago but had seen Mujica's name before on Facebook. After returning from a five-week quarantine and talking with his coworkers about the 36th Street's campaign, Daniel reached out to Mujica via Facebook Messenger and thus began the 21st Street worker's campaign.

The ability of informal communication to spawn a successful worker movement emphasizes the closeness of the migrant community within Chicago and the integration of Arise Chicago within this community. Organizer Laura Garza said, since Arise Chicago's founding, "they've done a really good job of sort of putting it out in the community that, you know, this is the work that they do. Therefore, workers contact Arise without us ever having to look for workers to start up campaigns…workers show up here." In addition to supporting specific groups of workers like those at El Milagro, Arise Chicago engages with issues that also impact the community at large. Garza explained, Arise Chicago hosts open sessions for workers to learn about their rights each month. After these workshops, workers sometimes approach Arise Chicago organizers and ask for more specific support with an issue from their workplace. Over the more than thirty years that Arise Chicago has supported low-wage workers, they have continued to deepen these relationships with the community and gained word-of-mouth publicity among migrants.

The involvement of Arise Chicago within the migrant community in Chicago is facilitated by the cultural familiarity and existing relationships that the Arise organizers have with Chicago's Latino migrant community, since many of the organizers are migrants themselves. Garza

immigrated to the United States with her family as a young girl. She explained that her experiences growing up impact how she relates to workers:

> "While I'm not undocumented, a number of my family members are. When I was a little girl, I was hearing stories about family members working without papers. So, I can relate to leaving your country to come here. We speak the same language…I know what it's like to open the fridge and have nothing in there…That experience that I had has made it easier for me to relate to workers in general."

Like Garza, many of the other organizers for Arise Chicago are immigrants or first-generation citizens in the US. As a result, they "speak the same language" as the low-wage and migrant workers they organize.

"Arise Chicago Opened Our Eyes": Arise Chicago's Organizing Strategy

Once contacted, Arise Chicago focuses on education to help workers overcome concerns about being fired or deported. Since the beginning of the El Milagro campaign, Arise Chicago has met with the workers in big groups at least quarterly and have also been consistently available to answer any questions or concerns from workers. All the workers I spoke with emphasized the educational role of Arise and how learning about their rights made them feel like they could take steps to improve their working conditions. For example, Daniel explained, "Arise Chicago opened our eyes because something so simple…like there's the law of the just work week that has six working days and one day off per week. In our factory, as well as the other one, they were working straight seven days per week…Our people learned that it wasn't legal and then they could file a complaint…" The law to which Daniel referred is Illinois' One Day Rest In Seven Act (ODRISA) which requires employees have a day off for every seven days that they work. In September 2021, the El Milagro workers filed an ODRISA complaint, and El Milagro subsequently announced that workers would be given Sundays off. As Daniel highlighted, the illegality of their exploitation was a central motivator for addressing the hardship they endured on the job. The process of learning

about their legal rights helped the El Milagro workers overcome concerns about speaking up and created a necessary sense of entitlement to rights protection.

While educating workers on their legal rights, Arise Chicago organizers explicitly aim to promote autonomy and confidence in workers. Garza explained that in her experience, learning about the ways in which labor law is set up to protect them if they organize, workers like those at El Milagro overcome their fears. In this way, she expressed that she sees herself as both an organizer and a counselor, talking to workers and helping them get over their fears and concerns. Gabriel remarked, "If we have any concern, we have a WhatsApp group where we ask questions…the whole [Arise] team is always available to help us." Arise's consistency and responsiveness to any concern that workers may have via WhatsApp, a popular messaging app, also builds trust between the workers and the organization.

The responsiveness of organizers to the concerns of workers is facilitated by the status of Arise Chicago as a non-profit organization. Unlike a union which supports itself through dues collected from workers, Arise Chicago relies on funding from government grants and private donors. As a result, the organizers have the time and liberty to support workers without worrying about the maintenance of the organization itself. Further, Arise Chicago does not have a collective bargaining agreement meaning that they can organize strikes and employ other organizing tactics which are not possible with such an agreement.

Gabriel noted, "What we all liked the liked most, my coworkers and personally, is that they are non-profit organizations…Do they talk to you about money? No. They talk to you about your problems, about what they are going to do, about what they are going to solve." For Gabriel, the non-profit status of Arise Chicago was essential to him receiving the kind of support that he felt he and his coworkers needed. While unions are also non-profit organizations, they are primarily

supported by dues paid by workers. Money is therefore an essential part of the conversation between workers and unions. Without documentation, migrant workers are unable to access the kinds of government support that native-born low-wage workers can access. Consequently, low-wage migrant workers face heightened economic vulnerability. The capacity of Arise Chicago to support workers in any action they wanted to pursue without collecting dues an essential component of its success.

"The Legal Jargon": Mutual Reliance Between Workers and Organizers

From the beginning, Arise Chicago relied on leaders within the El Milagro Tortilla Factory to help organize other workers. For example, Diego, a 21st Street factory worker, discussed how he helped Arise Chicago to coordinate meetings with his coworkers. Diego explained, "I tell them, you know, there is going to be a meeting. You are going to see this and you are going to be informed, because I really cannot inform you like the people with experience like…Arise Chicago knows how to give you the information better than I can." Diego did not feel confident sharing the information on his own, largely because of his lack of familiarity with labor laws in the state. But he had already interacted with Arise Chicago and knew what to expect. Using what he had learned, Diego was able to reassure his coworkers and encourage them to join him in meeting with Arise Chicago organizers. He could take the risk of going to the meeting with them. By relying on workers within the plants to share information, Arise Chicago's strategy takes advantage of the close connections between migrant workers and the knowledge workers have of their workplaces to increase trust in the campaign.

El Milagro workers rely on the legitimacy of Arise Chicago to interface with government officials and the public, just as Arise Chicago uses the legitimacy of El Milagro workers to organize them. As organizer Garza put it with a smile, "They write their complaints and then we

put all the legal jargon in there." Arise Chicago organizers are more knowledgeable about labor law and organizing strategies than the workers at El Milagro are and can be, given their full-time careers and often limited English competency. As Diego highlighted, Arise Chicago, "knows how to give you the information better than I can."

While many of the El Milagro workers speak little to no English, the Arise Chicago organizers are all bilingual. Further, they have higher educational attainment on average than the low-wage workers they support. After graduating from UIC and for nearly 20 years prior to joining Arise Chicago, Garza worked for the SEIU. With Arise Chicago, she relies on the expertise she gained with the union to plan campaign strategy, including how to use the media and the NLRB to the advantage of the workers: "We aren't a union, but we act like one…We use education and labor agencies in general to help in those campaigns and [we] think creatively about how we strategize around media and social media." El Milagro workers rely on organizers for knowledge and legitimacy beyond the factory in the same way that Arise Chicago organizers rely on El Milagro workers on the inside.

"In This Movement": Worker Empowerment and Belonging

Daniel explained that overcoming cultural differences his coworkers felt between themselves and native-born workers was necessary to their involvement in the movement. Considering the reluctance and fear of his coworkers to come forward, Daniel said:

> "I think that culturally, we Hispanics always are afraid of losing our jobs, and losing in a way our freedom or losing our power to be in this country and work to support our families in Mexico and our families that we have here…Workers born in this country, they don't work as hard as us because they know their rights and if there is something they don't like, they unionize and they fight for their labor rights and we don't even know our rights…We need to shake our fear and start a new life and learn this from this country."

According to Daniel, workers born in the US are different than himself and his coworkers. While part of this difference is created by knowledge gaps, he also ascribes the heightened fear of losing their jobs to 'Hispanic culture.' To Daniel, to successfully organize against their employer requires "shaking this fear" and embracing aspects of the culture of native-born workers who "don't work as hard because they know their rights."

Through participation in the worker movement, El Milagro workers have also gained a sense of entitlement to rights within the workplace. As Gabriel explained, "Because of the workshops that Arise Chicago provided us, we feel confident now talking in front of the bosses, demanding our rights." Not only does Gabriel now feel confident in his knowledge of his rights, but he also has gained a feeling of authority within the El Milagro factory. Gabriel's articulation of rights and his willingness to participate in the leadership of the workplace is consistent with theories of "self-governance" within the workplace, a form of citizenship within the economic sphere.

Further, in the process of organizing, the El Milagro workers began to see themselves within a broader community. Many of the workers that I spoke with expressed excitement about seeing other Chicago organizers and unions participate in their protest. Daniel told me, "There was a lot of support from people from the area, people from Little Village. There were lots of religious people too like clergy…There were even people from other unions. I remember people from the teacher's union…We did our stoppage and from there the whole big movement began. The news was heard, I think, on all the channels in Chicago." Daniel emphasized the involvement of activists and union members outside of the Little Village community. Alejandro too remarked that he and his coworkers are now, "in this movement," referring to Chicago's labor movement. For the workers at El Milagro, organizing with Arise Chicago and gaining the support of other members

of the Chicago community created a feeling of belonging. Their experience is consistent with the citizenship-generating power of labor organizing and participation in the labor movement. While labor law protections in the US are not dependent on citizenship, only through advocating for decent work alongside native-born workers that the El Milagro workers saw themselves as US rights holders. Garza remarked, "When you organize workers, it transcends from race and gender."

Having overcome the challenges inherent to beginning a migrant worker movement, the workers I spoke with were motivated to continue organizing to protect the rights that they have won. Diego concluded, "Everything keeps going because there are things that still need to be improved…we still have fear, a little fear because we've seen bad changes in the moods of owners and management…" To gain ongoing protection of their rights, Arise Chicago is in the process of connecting the workers with a union to join. While worker centers are vital resources at the beginning of a migrant worker movement, as the story of the El Milagro campaign demonstrates, unions are better equipped to serve as long-term support for workers and guarantee the protection of their rights going forward. Garza told me that "incubating unions" at workplaces is one of the crucial functions of Arise Chicago and other worker centers: "We are always looking for opportunities for workers to join a union and [are] letting our partner unions know that there are workers that may want to join."

"Just Hold On": El Milagro's Ongoing Campaign

The future of the El Milagro campaign is shaped by a recent immigration policy change. In a historic decision, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced new guidance on January 13, 2023 that establishes a streamlined process for immigrant workers to gain protection from deportation ("deferred action") and temporary work authorization while they are involved in a labor dispute under investigation by a federal or state labor agency (U.S. Department

of Homeland Security 2023). The announcement follows years of activism and organizing by Arise Chicago and other worker centers nationally.

On March 8, 2023, I attended a meeting between Arise Chicago organizers and the El Milagro team in a church in Little Village. At the meeting, organizers Garza, Mujica, and Uribe presented the DHS announcement and explained to workers how to apply. Already, a couple of the workers at El Milagro have gained deferred action and work authorization protections through the new process, among the first workers in the country to do so. Alejandro told me, "I have that deferred action benefit and I am applying for work authorization and…we are all right now in this movement, so we all have the right to that." The protections are still quite new, so many of the workers are still hesitant, particularly because applying entails outing oneself as an undocumented worker to the federal government. Nonetheless, some El Milagro workers are brave enough to take the risk and translate the feeling of citizenship that they have gained through organizing into real, legal protection to be in the US. At the March 8th meeting, one of these workers stood proudly at the front of the church holding a printout of an email approving his deferred action application and addressed his coworkers: "The government is helping us now. Just hold on."

Meeting the Needs of Chicago's Migrant Workers

As the labor movement is transformed by the worker center movement, labor policy too should grapple with the specific needs of migrant workers. Following from established human rights principles, policymakers should aim to ensure that the rights of all workers are equally protected, regardless of their legal status. This is especially important because migrants are more easily exploited than native-born workers, without legal citizenship, as victims of job casualization, and with limited knowledge of their rights. The DHS policy initiative announced on January 13th is consistent with the need to recognize and support migrant workers directly in

pursuit of the goal of equal treatment. The initiative announced is a new streamlined DHS procedure to grant workers involved in a labor dispute temporary deferred action on deportation proceedings and work authorization.

Migrant workers around the country, including some workers at El Milagro, have begun taking advantage of this policy. Nonetheless, many workers remain hesitant to apply because in doing so, workers must alert the DHS of their status as undocumented workers. My findings suggest that migrant worker participation in federal programs requires education and support at the local community level. Trust is crucial to successfully organizing and protecting the rights of any workers, particularly non-citizens. Given the undocumented status of many migrant workers, creating trust in government labor rights agencies is extremely difficult. On this front, worker centers like Arise Chicago have seen great success in building relationships and trust with workers. Arise Chicago has created such a strong relationship with its member workers that Arise has been able to support workers from El Milagro to apply for the new deferred action, despite some workers' initial hesitation. For Alejandro, the consistent support of the organizers from Arise Chicago was necessary to encourage him to apply.

My findings suggest that worker centers are best equipped to support migrant workers in asserting their rights because organizers with worker centers are often immigrants themselves. They are thus able to engage with the migrant community more effectively. Further, the flexibility of worker centers as education-focused non-profits allows them to better respond to worker concerns. My findings also illustrate how participation in organizing with support from a worker center builds worker confidence and sense of belonging in the community. Thus, changes like the January 13th initiative are most impactful for workers who are also educated and supported by a worker center.

Worker centers help workers organize and engage with the community at the local level. Thus, city policy changes are necessary to support the essential role of worker centers in helping workers make rights claims to city, state, and federal labor agencies. City policy is especially important because cities can pass legislation that provides greater protection for migrant workers, even without national political support (Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). Further, state and city policies protecting workers and migrants can have profound impacts on worker well-being, as demonstrated by the use of Illinois' ODRISA policy in the El Milagro campaign. Labor policy in Chicago can and should be updated to meet the needs of migrant workers, including supporting worker centers who have already established legitimacy and trust within the migrant worker community. Such policy changes will not only provide workers with greater protection under city policies but will also empower workers to claim their federal rights.

Within the City of Chicago, Garza highlighted, "Chicago has recently passed some really good worker ordinances and laws to protect workers." In particular, Chicago implemented a series of pro-labor changes in July 2022, including the creation of a dedicated City Office of Labor Standards, the creation of the Fair Workweek Ordinance, and an increase to the city's minimum wage. Like the DHS announcement, these updates came following years of activism and advocacy by worker centers and union in the city, especially the Raise the Floor Alliance, a group of eight Chicago worker centers including Arise Chicago.

As these policies are implemented, the City of Chicago should collaborate with worker centers like Arise Chicago and focus on education, empowerment, and trust-building with the migrant community. Garza explained, "It's not just the responsibility of the city, but how are they working with worker centers like ourselves…" Acknowledging the disconnect between migrant workers and local government, Garza sees an investment in worker centers by local government

as a necessary first step toward the implementation of these recent policy changes. With the election of former union organizer Brandon Johnson as Mayor of Chicago, a candidate who also once served on the board of Arise Chicago, Garza anticipates the City of Chicago will at last form relationships with worker centers for the implementation of labor policies.

To support worker centers, the City of Chicago should expand grant opportunities for worker centers using funding allocated for the implementation of the new labor reform policies. With grant funding, worker centers will educate workers about the existence of these policies, with a focus on addressing concerns around organizing. Further, the city should cultivate long-term relationships with worker centers by creating an advisory board for the new Office of Labor Standards with designated seats for worker center leaders and organizers. Worker centers played a critical role in advocating for the creation of this office and their experiences organizing migrant workers should inform its management to ensure that the specific needs of migrant workers are met. Finally, as a sanctuary city, Chicago should continue investing in migrant workers by protecting immigrants in general. By protecting immigrants, the city can reduce deportation concerns that migrant workers should overcome when organizing for their rights.

Today, nearly 89% of workers in the US are not part of a union. Workers who are unprotected by a union and experience violations of their rights at work most often turn to worker centers. Particularly within migrant communities, worker centers have been essential resources to expanding worker protections and union membership. Labor policies must catch up with the needs of these workers in the contemporary labor market to remain relevant for all workers in this country. The City of Chicago has an opportunity to effectively reach migrant workers with the implementation of recently passed labor reforms, particularly with the support of incoming Mayor Brandon Johnson. This means that policy makers in Chicago should listen to worker centers like

Arise Chicago, since they are the only ones who have thus far effectively organized migrant workers. The impact of these city-level changes to include worker centers and to support migrant workers directly will be profound. Protecting migrant workers and worker centers in the city will not only improve working conditions but will further empower migrant workers as rights holders to claim their federal labor and citizenship rights.

Conclusion

In sum, policymakers must recognize that migrant workers differ from native-born workers in a few crucial ways. Migrant workers often have heightened concerns about organizing because they lack citizenship in the US. While native-born workers fear being fired for organizing, migrant workers also fear losing their work authorization or even being deported. Consistent with human rights principles, workers are equally entitled to protection by US labor law regardless of their legal status. Nonetheless, migrant workers are less aware of their rights and do not feel entitled to claiming them. Unions in the US are maladapted to meet the needs of migrant workers and help them overcome these concerns. Instead, migrant workers turn to worker centers for support.

Worker centers have spread rapidly across the country, with an emphasis on supporting non-unionized low-wage and migrant workers. Through interviews with workers from El Milagro and with Arise Chicago organizers, my findings illustrate how worker centers help migrant workers overcome these fears and successfully organize for their rights. Worker centers are essential because they translate across cultural and linguistic barriers and counsel workers throughout the organizing process. My conversations with El Milagro workers further demonstrate that in the process of organizing, migrant workers also begin to see themselves within the broader communities in which they work, generating a feeling of citizenship and entitlement to protection. To support migrant workers, cities should invest in and listen to worker centers. In Chicago, this

means expanding grant opportunities for worker centers, creating opportunities for worker center organizers to advise the city's new Office of Labor Standards, and continuing to protect immigrants as a sanctuary city. Through city-level policy changes, Chicago can protect migrant workers and empower them as rights holders.

For the workers at El Milagro, organizing with Arise Chicago was life changing. Through their organizing, they have won major improvements to their working conditions at the factory. These workers now also have the confidence to seek out and join a union, to ensure that their labor rights are protected going forward. As a catalyst for migrant worker movements, worker centers are an increasingly vital part of the contemporary labor movement. As Arise Chicago organizer Laura Garza explained, "It's important right now that we don't separate ourselves…We have done the work to say, 'Wait a second. We are part of the labor movement too, not just unions.'" Until all workers have access to decent work and fair treatment regardless of their legal status, worker centers are here to stay.

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Appendix

Quotes from El Milagro workers in Spanish are included in order of appearance in the text.

Gabriel: “Todo fue nuevo para mí y todos mis compañeros.” (pp. 17)

Daniel: “Yo había escuchado en México de las huelgas que en algún momento se vuelven ilegales. Entonces, no vaya a ser que hagamos algo ilegal y nos metamos en un problema distinto.” (pp. 17)

Alejandro: “Yo vengo de trabajar en el sector petrolero en Colombia y allá la cuestión de seguridad es muy grande y la cuestión de derecho laboral es muy muy pesado, pues pesa mucho en todo…Yo era jefe entonces tenía más capacitación sobre eso.” (pp. 17)

Alejandro: “Resulta que llego de acá a trabajar en una compañía de alimentos y la seguridad es mínima…y te hacen cualquier cantidad de cosas mal.” (pp. 18)

Alejandro: “Yo soy de Colombia. Yo vengo de otro, de otro mundo. Pues yo pensé que Estados Unidos era bueno para nosotros por ser de país tercermundista, como nos dicen. Mal nos dicen, porque resulta que laboralmente nosotros somos mucho mejor que aquí…” (pp. 18)

Alejandro: “En general, no tienen derecho a nada.” (pp. 18)

Daniel: “Se escuchó en el rumor de que los compañeros de la planta 36 habían recibido un dólar de aumento.” (pp. 18)

Daniel: “Arise Chicago nos abrió los ojos porque algo tan simple…como hay una ley que es la semana laboral justa, que tiene uno que trabajar seis días y descansar un día por semana. Entonces en la planta de nosotros, sino en otra planta, ellos estaban trabajando corrido siete días a la semana…Nuestra gente aprendió que eso no era legal y podían hacer una queja…” (pp. 20)

Gabriel: “Si tenemos una duda, tenemos un grupo de WhatsApp donde le hacemos preguntas…todo el equipo está dispuesto a ayudarnos siempre.” (pp. 21)

Gabriel: “Lo que más nos ha gustado, a todos nuestros compañeros y en lo personal, es que son asociaciones sin fines de lucro… ¿Te hablan de dinero? No. Ellos te hablan sobre tus problemas, sobre lo que se va a hacer, sobre lo que se va a solucionar.” (pp. 21)

Diego: “Yo les digo sabes que va a haber una junta. Va a ver esto y se les va a informar, porque realmente yo no les puedo informar como la gente con experiencia como…Arise Chicago sabe darle la información mejor que yo.” (pp. 22)

Daniel: “Yo creo que culturalmente nosotros hispanos tenemos siempre el miedo a perder el trabajo, a perder algún modo la libertad o perder el poder estar en este país y trabajar para ayudar tanto a nuestra familia en México como a la familia que tenemos aquí…Los trabajadores que nacieron en este país, ellos no trabajan tan fuerte como nosotros porque ellos conocen sus derechos y si algo no les gusta se unen y luchan por sus derechos de trabajadores y nosotros ni

siquiera conocemos nuestros derechos…Tenemos que sacudirnos el miedo y empezar una nueva vida y aprender este de este país." (pp. 23)

Gabriel: "Por los talleres que nos han brindado Arise Chicago, nos sentimos seguros a la hora de hablar frente a los patrones, exigiendo nuestros derechos." (pp. 24)

Daniel: "Hubo mucho apoyo de la gente que estaba alrededor, gente de La Villita. Hubo mucha gente también de religiosos…Fueron algunas personas de otros sindicatos. Recuerdo del sindicato de maestros…Hicimos nuestro paro y de ahí empezó todo el movimiento grande. Se escuchó la noticia yo creo que en todos los canales de Chicago." (pp. 24)

Diego: "Sigue adelante todo porque hay cosas que mejorar todavía…Tenemos un poco de miedo porque como se ha visto un poco de cambio de mal humor con los dueños y con la gerencia…" (pp. 25)

Alejandro: "Yo tengo ese beneficio de acción diferida y estoy aplicando para un permiso de trabajo y ya…todos estamos ahorita en ese movimiento entonces todos tengamos derecho a eso." (pp. 26)

Anonymous Worker: "El gobierno nos está ayudando. Solo espera." (pp. 26)