



# THE INTAKE

Your Contributions to Justice at Work  
Issue 15, Volume 1 (Fall 2024)

## Mr. Mejia Goes to Washington

*You've allowed workers to go from the shadows to Congress*

JUSTICE AT  
**WORK**

When Sergio Mejia (far left) noticed that his co-workers at a large crab processing facility were confronting wage theft, unsafe conditions, and retaliation, he was uncertain about whether to put his own job in jeopardy by speaking out. Sergio had worked his way up to gaining his employer's confidence, enjoying long hours to support his family. Ultimately, doing right by his fellow co-workers won out, and Sergio joined forces with the Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores to support them in delivering a letter to the employer. In addition, Sergio collaborated in government investigations into health and safety, child labor and wage theft. Shortly thereafter, his hours were cut, until he had no work at all.

Thanks to you, Sergio gained the legal support of Justice at Work to file a retaliation complaint. In addition, in order to ensure witnesses and other impacted workers felt confident coming forward, we requested the government offer temporary immigration relief to Sergio and his co-workers, and we hosted monthly legal clinics at CCT to help them fill out applications. Since last year, over 600 CCT members have applied for deferred action, emboldening them to speak up about workplace violations. In August, our team helped facilitate an assembly in New Bedford at which over 500 community members heard from government officials, including representatives from Immigration, something once considered impossible given the trauma caused by a large ICE raid in 2007. Last month, Sergio and three other CCT members visited Washington, DC, for the first time, where they connected with workers from around the country who are blowing the whistle on bad employers. On the last day of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network conference, Sergio was a panelist to a Congressional audience, sharing his story and the importance of workers like him remaining protected.

“ I was motivated because I wanted the representatives to carry the message of our stories and at least touch their hearts a little bit so that they would allow us to achieve permanent protection as a united community. ”

- Sergio, CCT  
Pescando Justicia  
Coordinator

Join us as we allow more workers like Sergio to expose workplace violations and ensure their experiences inform immigration and labor policy moving forward.

## Update from Marta, Ruth, Miguel

*How your support has improved lives*

We reconnected with the worker leaders you helped us honor at our Annual Celebration last year. Marta (m.), Ruth (far left) and Miguel (far right) demanded their rights at a seafood processing plant. In exposing violations to authorities, they became eligible for immigration relief. Now, as direct employees of the fishhouse, enjoying paid vacation and other benefits for the first time, they updated us on how their lives have changed:

Marta Osorio: I feel more powerful because I have the opportunity to look for work elsewhere if needed. Outside of work, I can now do my taxes in a way that allows me to contribute to my retirement, and become able to buy a home for my family.

Miguel Angel: the company added a safety manager. Now, when you start working they take you upstairs for four hours of training and videos. And they prioritize worker complaints. Before, we used to get tossed back and forth like a ball between the plant and the temp agency—each of them blaming the other until, in the end, “caso olvidado.”

Ruth Castro: I’m on paid leave for the first time in two decades of working in the industry. The company provided the state the info needed to make sure my rights were realized. Now, I can get better, and I look forward to going back to work next month.”



## “ What now? ”

Ruth: “There are still issues at the plant. Wages don’t reflect seniority. The floors are left slippery from fish fat. They only make sure to tidy up the plant before the inspectors arrive.”

Miguel: “The big question for us is if the government monitoring wraps up, how can we keep the company complying with the law. And what will happen with us ‘troublemakers?’”



# Temp Workers Seek Permanent Change

*Your support allows for creative advocacy*



*Aura at the factory where she showed us how temp workers punched in and out.*

As we reported a year ago, Aura and about 100 temp workers were suddenly fired during the 2022 holiday season. Aura and others reached out to MassCOSH, who invited us to lead know-your-rights sessions. The workers then requested us to file a class action lawsuit against their former bosses for not warning them about the mass layoff and paying their last checks late. Last month, Aura returned to the factory where she'd spent countless hours assembling and packaging Subway and Dunkin' products, but this time as a plaintiff explaining the inner workings of the factory to our Senior Staff Attorney Pablo Carrasco. It marked the first time that your support has allowed our litigation team to do an on-site inspection of an employer.

Too often, we see companies use staffing agencies to sidestep essential worker rights. As our litigation lifts up issues facing temp workers, our allies MassCOSH and the Boston College Law School Civil Rights Clinic have teamed up to survey temp workers and issue a report outlining steps needed to improve the industry. At a press conference in July to publicize the report, our former client Maritza shared her story of being forced to work off-the-clock as a temp worker. While Maritza secured a fair settlement, and Aura is hopefully on the same track, many temp workers still face abuses due to a lack of community and legal support. As the temp staffing industry prospers, Maritza and Aura appreciate your continued support of their self-advocacy.

“ It is crucial that workers have the power to enforce their rights, and lawmakers must ensure they have the tools they need when bosses find ways to undermine those rights or stop them from accessing justice. ”

-Osvaldo Vazquez,

Fair Work, P.C., our co-counsel in Aura's case.



*PVWC co-director Claudia Rosales after beating seven other teams at Building Justice's 3rd Annual Soccer & Solidarity, organized last month by the Brazilian Worker Center and Justice at Work.*

## Going West

*Your support engages workers in the Pioneer Valley*

Thanks to you, in May, our team traveled for the first time to Northampton to learn more about the realities experienced by immigrant farmworkers and food service workers in that region. We met Leninn Torres, a Mexican immigrant and restaurant worker who first volunteered with PVWC's COVID mutual aid program and now is their Lead Community Organizer. Leninn and his colleague Sarah Takasaki then joined us, along with staff from eight other worker organizations, at our four-session 7th Annual Summer Institute: Immigration Relief to Promote Workplace Dignity. Shortly after, Leninn and Sarah came to New Bedford to volunteer at an immigration clinic we organized for CCT members.



*Leninn (standing 3rd from right) and Sarah (below far right) with Institute graduates*

“ Justice at Work's experience and commitment to our base allowed them to familiarize us with the deferred action process so we can implement it with our community. ”

-Leninn Torres, PVWC Lead Community Organizer



# DANCE FOR JUSTICE XIII

*Saturday November 16th*

*6pm - 10pm*

*Dante's*

*41 Hampshire St.*

*Cambridge, MA 02139*

Food, DJ,  
dance classes, and performances!

## JUSTICE AT WORK

### Staff

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