



Celebrating 10 years of fighting for worker justice in Cincinnati WINTER 2015-2016

Mayor Cranley Announces “Crackdown on Wage Theft”

Action against wage theft was included among recommendations to retain and protect immigrants in a plan announced Oct. 28 by Mayor John Cranley’s Immigration Task Force. The Task Force looked at both high-skilled, documented immigrants and undocumented immigrants in its plan, aimed at making Cincinnati “the most immigrant-friendly city in the United States.”

“While there is political rhetoric around the country saying (immigration) is not a good thing, we are emphatically saying we love immigration, we want more immigration,” Cranley said. “We be-

lieve it is a key to our economic future and to a better, more just society.”

When speaking of the city’s economic future, Cranley was referring to immigrants who are naturalized citizens or eligible for citizenship. This group of documented immigrants represents 66.2 percent of the city’s foreign-born population, according to a report from Partnership for a New American Economy released by Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce at the press conference.

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The Immigrant Friendly Task Force announces its recommendations on October 28. *Photo Credit—Mike Brown*

Building Worker Power Together—since 2005

This December, CIWC celebrates 10 years of joining with members and allies to elevate the voices of workers facing injustice. Many activities in the past few months show how this tradition continues:

CIWC Helps Workers Blow the Whistle at Nippert Stadium



This summer, the CIWC met with several brave welders who were worried about the quality of welding performed at U.C.'s Nippert stadium renovations. The CIWC helped uncover fraudulent welding certifications that were submitted to the University of Cincinnati by one of its subcontractors. When the CIWC visited the U.C. Auditors to present the worker's concerns and documentation, no action was taken. CIWC rallied students and allies for a demonstration at the stadium. Over the next few weeks Jodie Barr of Fox 19 investigated these reports and found damning and compelling corroboration, which it shared in a five part series. Fox 19 recognized the CIWC as the organization that helped local workers blow the whistle. (www.fox19.com/story/30207861/more-faked-weld-certs-uncovered-in-in-ky-during-fox19-investigation)

Workers' Center Solidarity Action

Members of El Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL), our sister workers center in Minneapolis, called on the CIWC to deliver letters to Macy's at its headquarters here in Cincinnati. The letter called attention to janitors, members of CTUL, who work for Capital Building Services Group (CBSG) cleaning Macy's stores. The janitors are in an ongoing class action lawsuit against CBSG,

complaining that the company paid as low as \$4-5 an hour at times. On October 28 the CIWC leaders Manuel Perez, Glenda Ventura and Jorge Garay met with Karen Hoguet, Macy's Chief Financial Officer.

Food Chain Worker Delegation to Kroger

The United Farm Workers called on the CIWC to help host a rally at Kroger's on behalf of workers at Riverview Farms and the widow of a farmworker who died tragically on the job. In addition to hosting the rally, the CIWC helped the UFW get an important discussion with Kroger leaders. In a rally at Kroger's HQ on November 10th over 38,000 petitions were delivered. At the delegation CIWC ally Sister Tracy Kemme (*pictured, left*) also delivered a special letter to Kroger's CEO

directing their attention to a construction contractor that regularly works at Kroger stores, Gem's Interiors. Gem's immigrant abuses were recently brought to light by a major Dept. of Labor wage theft recovery.



Sit Down with Al. Neyer on Wage Theft Case

The CIWC has over 20 open wage theft disputes it is helping to resolve. One of them is on behalf of unpaid construction workers at the Whitfield Ave Apartment development in Clifton. The unpaid work was performed for Buckeye Rebar and Lithko Contracting on an Al. Neyer project. Getting nowhere with the subcontractors, Manuel Pérez sent an invitation to Al. Neyer's CEO, Molly North, to sit down and discuss the case. Ms. North agreed to meet. The meeting was productive. Al. Neyer shared its "zero tolerance" policy wage theft policy and began investigating the complaint immediately.

Food Chain Workers Alliance Supports Black Lives Matter in the wake of violent attacks

On November 15, when Minneapolis police fatally shot Jamar Clark, an unarmed 24-year-old black man. On November 24 the local expression of Black Lives Matter gathered the community in protest. Several armed white antagonists arrived on the scene, shooting 6 protesters; thankfully, none of the victims were critically injured. Our affiliate Food Chain Workers Alliance issued this statement, which we *continued on back page*

A Regional Photo Identification Card Is Coming

By Tony Stieritz, Director of Catholic Social Action for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati

An identification card for undocumented residents of Cincinnati is close to becoming a reality thanks to the efforts of Catholic Charities, the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati (MARCC), the Workers Center and others.

Mayor John Cranley has agreed that all departments within the City of Cincinnati, including the Police Department, would accept the card as valid ID, provided city council passes legislation to make it effective. Such legislation is to be introduced this fall.

It is our sincere hope that fewer immigrants would be deported if they had a valid ID. We know that deportation tears families apart, weakens their financial and emotional well-being, erodes trust with local police, stresses neighborhood communities, and undermines the economic health of the city.

When immigrants can prove their identity to local police, there is often no reason for police to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which can detain immigrants and place them into deportation proceedings. As a result, “driving without a license” in the City of Cincinnati, should not lead to deportation, if the driver has an ID card.

The story of Jose Raxon, a member of the Workers Center, illustrates the challenge.

After a traffic incident in January, Cincinnati police took Jose to jail, where he was booked by the sheriff. Jose’s wife contacted Manuel Perez, an organizer at the

Workers Center, and Manuel put out the call to Brennan Grayson, myself, and others. The Workers Center organized a rally at the jail to free Jose, but the sheriff contacted ICE, and ICE took Jose into custody. Fortunately, ICE released Jose after questioning him. But, if Jose had a valid ID, this incident might have unfolded much differently. We expect he would have been issued a citation at the scene of the incident and released.

Jose’s story was a powerful event in my life. First, it was a stark reminder of how I can go home to my wife and kids, the most precious things in my life, without any fear that one day I would be snatched up and sent away from them—all because I had come here to feed and shelter my family. Second, I was able to celebrate my birthday over lunch with Jose, his family, and friends from the Workers Center. The food was good, but most special was when Jose sang Happy Birthday to me.

The Mayor’s Immigration Task Force recommended that the City create a municipal ID for immigrants and others who might not be able to obtain a state-issued ID. Because the City is unwilling to fund and implement the ID, MARCC has agreed to sponsor the card, and Catholic Charities has agreed to produce it.

ID cards would be issued on certain days each month at Catholic Charities. Applicants would present identification such as matricula, passport, or birth certificate as well as proof of residency such as a utility bill or bank statement. If this paperwork is in order, a photo-ID would be made for a small fee. A Cincinnati police officer would be present to explain how to use the ID.

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The mayor, Chamber CEO Jill Meyer, and Task Force Co-Chairs Raj Chundur and Tom Fernandez emphasized the economic benefit of documented immigrants. They are attractive because of their advanced education, high-tech skills, entrepreneurship, spending power, and willingness to invest in local businesses.

Cincinnati Interfaith Workers’ Center led an effort to include immigrants from across the spectrum in the mayor’s task force, serving on committees, recruiting more immigrants to do the same, and working with allies to craft an Immigrants’ Bill of Rights, which was presented to the mayor. As a result, the final recommendations included proposals which will improve the quality of life for CIWC members and others.



“Another one of the recommendations is a crackdown on wage theft,” said Cranley. Vice Mayor David Mann indicated that his office would be coming forward with a proposal to address the issue.

CIWC and its Just Pay – Cincy campaign is working with city leaders to help shape this crackdown in three areas: 1) The city of should adopt vendor regulations modeled on President Obama’s Fair Pay and Safe Working Conditions Executive Order; 2) the city should adopt a zero tolerance policy for instances of wage theft by including wage theft prevention rules and penalties in all economic development contracts; and 3) the city’s police

department and prosecutor’s office effectively enforce the criminal provisions of Ohio’s minimum wage and overtime laws, and the related retaliation protections; they should be directed to develop trainings and provide guidance to city employees. across departments. Adapted from article by Mike Brown, *Cincinnatians For the American Dream (C4AD)*.



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News & Announcements

CIWC Publishes *A History of Wage Theft in Cincinnati 2005-2015* for its 10th Anniversary, documenting major wage theft recoveries. Many thanks to Peerless Printing. Request a copy today!

Just Pay – Cincy Video: Watch wage theft stories from members and an explanation of the key reforms demanded, now available on our webpage. Thanks to Alma Diaz, Don Oliver, Jen Mendoza, Erick Stoll, Jarrod Welling-Cann, Pam Dixon, Kayla Burns, Paul Bredeenbach and Megan Hague.

Feature Film & Panel Discussion on Temporary Worker Safety & Health. On November 10th, UC hosted a screening of "A Day's Work" about Lawrence Daquan Davis, a 21-year-old temp worker who died on his first day on the job at a Bacardi bottling plant in Jacksonville, Florida. CIWC member Cleve Williams added the temporary workers' voice to a panel. Thanks to the Enquirer for covering the event (www.cincinnati.com/story/money/2015/11/20/temporary-workers-more-likely-die-job/76040584/#)

Workers Center Job Fair. After our first job fair proved a success, the CIWC will co-host a job fair on Saturday, Dec. 5th at noon with Working in Neighborhoods (WIN).

Want to spread the word? Host a house party. Please pick a date to host a House Party to raise awareness about our campaigns and raise funds for operations. Just invite 10 friends and pick a date. We will be there.

Contribute. The New Year is coming soon! Consider providing financial support to the CIWC, a 501(c)(3) organization, by sending a donation to the address below. Any amount makes a difference. Thank you!

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adopted and now share with our own community.

"We emphatically reject the violent abhorrent actions that took place in Minneapolis against peaceful Black Lives Matters protesters. We call on our elected officials to denounce these terrorists with the same vigor as the attacks in Paris last week. As the country's largest private sector workforce, the nation's 20 million food workers form the backbone of the economy. Over 40% of workers in the food system are people of color. However, the food system has the lowest wages of any sector in the economy. The legacy of slavery continues to plague the food system, and our society at large. The jobs that were once slave-labor; farmworkers, pickers, servers and others are now by no coincidence the lowest paid jobs in America. Unless we leave these chains behind we will not be able to move forward and value the labor of the people who put food on our table. On this International Food Worker Week when we give thanks for our families and the food we are blessed to share, let us not forget the workers and their families that struggle every day to put food on their tables. As food workers we give thanks to the Black Lives Matter movement and our shared struggle to free us all from the legacy of slavery in our food system and in society."

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or find us on Facebook and Twitter!