

# If You Want It, Go For It

Eugenio Negron

When I was 18 years old, I wanted a job so that I could be an independent person. I decided to start taking the bus every morning to look for work. I would fill out four to five employment applications every day.

Months went by, and I was not able to find work. From time to time, I would get discouraged and say to myself, "I'm never going to be able to find a job." My mother used to see me sad and would tell me that things were going to be fine and not to give up on my goals.

## From Temp Employment...

One day, I was walking down the street in Agawam and I saw a sign for Tempos Employment. It was a temp agency that had temporary jobs available. I said to myself, "A temporary job is better than no job."

I walked in and presented myself in a very respectful manner. When I was filling out the application, I got to a question that asked me about



*According to the New York Times (1-27-13), "temp jobs are beyond the reach of many workplace protections, not only health benefits but also unemployment insurance, anti-discrimination laws, and union organizing rights." Look at the chart on p. 50. What are the advantages and disadvantages of temp work from an employer's perspective? And from an employee's perspective?*



my job skills. I froze. How should I answer the question? I didn't want to look bad on the application, but the truth was that I'd never in my life had a job and did not have any working skills. So I decided to speak to the supervisor and let him know that I wanted an opportunity to prove to him that I am a hard worker and that I learn very quickly.

I must have made a good impression because the supervisor asked, "When can you start?" I said, "Right now." He smiled and said, "You start tomorrow."

That evening while we were making dinner my mother looked at me and said, "You look happy." I said, "I got a job. It's temporary, but it's a start." She was so happy for me. I told her I was going to be working at Simmons Bedding in Agawam making beds and inspecting them.

The next morning I got to work 30 minutes early so that I could meet my supervisors and tell them a little about myself. They were amazed by the way I presented myself and told me that they saw potential in me.

## ...to Full-Time Employment

Two months went by, and I wondered how long my "temporary" job would last. I decided to ask my supervisor. He said, "I'm glad you asked because I've been keeping an eye on you, and you surprised me with your ability to work." He asked how I would feel about becoming a permanent worker at the company.

I was so surprised; I was speechless. He said to me, "I guess that answers my question." We

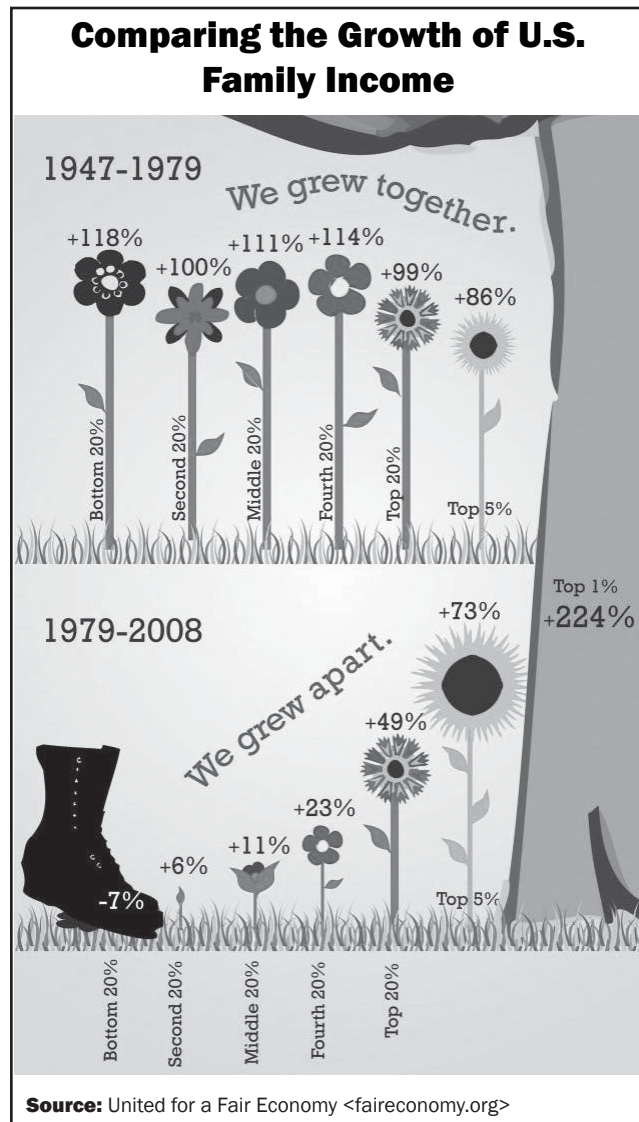
just started laughing, and he said, "I'm glad the agency gave you an opportunity and so did I." This made me realize that if there is something in life that you want to achieve, you've got to go for it; don't get discouraged. That sounds like a happy ending to my story, but things got complicated.

### I Couldn't Make it Work

Working at Simmons Bedding was good at first. The pay was fine for a single 18-year old. I was earning \$14.50 an hour. They paid for dental, they had tuition reimbursement, and they even paid me for my sick days as well as vacation days. But as my family grew, the job I had was not enough to support them, and I chose to turn to the streets. I'm a dad to seven children, three of my own. They have been a part of my life for 13 years now. I'm 35 years old and currently incarcerated at the Hampshire County Jail for making poor decisions to try to support my family.

Now that I find myself behind these walls and away from my family, I have finally realized that there's no money in the world that can fulfill that empty space in our children's hearts. Always remember that God only puts obstacles in front of us that we can handle. We just have to make the right choices to get over those obstacles without failure.

*Eugenio Negrón is a student at the Hampshire County Jail in western Massachusetts.*



### Making Sense of the Story

**Study the chart** above. Describe what you see. Pay attention to details, including the choice of images. Notice the tree on the right, and consider the phrase "off the charts."

**Write three true statements** based on the information in the chart. How would it have been different to join the workforce between 1947 and 1979 as opposed to the last 30 years? How do you think these changes in economic trends happen?

**Did Eugenio's story surprise you?** Why or why not? Does it make sense to consider his story in the context of wider economic trends, such as those described in the chart? Explain.