

“We Can Fix It”

A Worker Cooperative that Does Repair Work and Has No Bosses

Victor Rodriguez

What is “We Can Fix It”?

“We Can Fix It” is a cooperative of men and women. We do small construction jobs and repairs. The Cooperative is a support for us as immigrants. We do demolition, repairs, painting, and floor-sanding. We have experience hanging sheetrock and fixing holes in plaster walls and ceilings.

Why did you set up a cooperative? Why not an ordinary business?

We wanted a cooperative so that our salaries would be fair.

What was it like working in construction before you were in a cooperative?

I had to walk the streets looking for work. The bosses abused the workers. Sometimes I got paid. Sometimes I didn’t. I had to have my own tools. They did not give us protection from hazards on the job. When I was working with hazardous materials, I had to push them to give me a mask or something to cover my mouth.

How has being in a cooperative affected other parts of your life?

We are learning how to run a business. We are integrating ourselves into society. I feel like a person who can do more important things.

What do you like best about working in a cooperative?

We are independent because we are our own bosses and workers. And we don’t have to give information to any bosses or

anybody, only to the members.

What is most challenging about it?

Not speaking perfect English. Sometimes we ask the coordinators of the Center for Family Life for help.

Is your cooperative being affected by the economic crisis?

Yes, it is being affected. There are not enough jobs.

What sort of support does your community need?

It is important for community centers to give workshops so that day laborers and immigrants know their rights. Some don’t know their rights, and they are suffering discrimination.

Victor Rodriguez is an ESOL student at Center for Family Life in Brooklyn, NY.

