



# THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for  
Social Justice: News,  
Issues, and Ideas

## GOOD JOBS, NOT JUST ANY JOBS!

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## Paid Today, Broke Tomorrow

Mariama Diallo



A good job should allow you to pay your bills, to eat, to get clothes according to the weather, and to get medical treatment when needed. Not only that, a good job should pay you enough so that you can have time to live and enjoy a little of life.

I've been at my job for almost 11 years but I have never gotten a raise even though the price of everything has gone up. We receive only minimum wages. We work hard for a paycheck that doesn't allow us to survive. Who wants a job where you get paid today and you're broke tomorrow? It makes you feel like things are falling apart around you because you know that you are not going to be able to pay your bills.

Nowadays, many adults realize that it's time to make a change for a better life. We don't want to accept any job in order not to be unemployed. But how can we get good jobs—jobs that allow us not only to survive but to enjoy life too?

Mariama Diallo is a student at the Adult Learning Center Mid-Manhattan: #5 in New York City. Mariama came from Senegal over 11 years ago. She is delighted to show her work to her 10-year old daughter, Fatoumata, who is an excellent fifth grade student. Fatoumata has been selected to participate in the school's math bee.



*The Change Agent* is the biannual publication of The New England Literacy Resource Center. Each issue of the paper helps teachers incorporate social justice content into their curriculum. The paper is designed for intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED, and adult diploma classes. Each issue focuses on a different topic that is relevant to learners' lives.

In New England, *The Change Agent* is available free of charge in limited quantities through NELRC's affiliated state literacy resource centers (SABES, CREC, Vermont Department of Education, Literacy Resources/RI and RI PD Center, New Hampshire Department of Education, and Maine Adult Education). Contact these centers to learn how to receive your free copies. PDF versions of *The Change Agent* can be downloaded from our Website.

**Submissions. Our next issue is on technology.** See the "Call for Articles" on the back cover. We welcome submissions from teachers and students as well as activists and thinkers from outside the field. For submission guidelines visit <[www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent)> or contact us at 617-482-9485 or [changeagent@worlded.org](mailto:changeagent@worlded.org).

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## From the Editor

Many adults are attending school to get the skills they need to get a better job. But will they be able to find a *good* job? Speaking of which...what is a good job? And how do you get one? In this issue, *The Change Agent* explores these questions and more. Students share compelling stories of satisfying work, as well as dangerous and demeaning work and those jobs that are a mixture of both. Their advice and stories will inspire readers to make goals, learn skills, and think critically about the world of work. In addition to providing food for thought, this issue shares concrete examples of ordinary people—alone and with others—taking steps to be agents of change in the workplace.

## New—Article Leveling and a FREE WEBINAR

If you are a teacher, be on the lookout for a free webinar on how to use this issue of *The Change Agent* in the classroom—coming up in April! To aid in your teaching, visit our website and download a Table of Contents that lists the reading level of each of the articles.

## Some Articles are Available in Audio

Listen to articles read out loud while you follow along with the text. Notice also that there are “extras” on our website to supplement this issue. Remember, you need to be a subscriber so that you can receive a username and password to access our online materials. If you’re not a subscriber, now’s a good time to remedy that! Visit <[www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent)> and click on “subscribe.”



## Meet the Editorial Board

*Standing from left to right: Cynthia Peters, editor of The Change Agent; Keturah Brewster, Boston Latin School; Allison Simmons, SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund, Claire Bertrand, JFF; Elsa Auerbach, author and advocate; Marcos Washington, Teen Empowerment; Connie Nelson, Workers' Roundtable; Jeremy Shenk, Community Labor United; Manny Knaggs, Excel. Sitting from left to right: Josh Roe, YouthBuild; Sandy Goodman, World Education; Andy Nash, NELRC; and Leah Peterson, World Education. Not pictured: Mariana Davenport, NY Communities for Change; Scott Emerick, YouthBuild; Taywana "Mother Earth" Jones, ProLiteracy; Hilary Stern, Immigrant Workers' Center.*

# Humans, Not Machines

*Maria L. Hernández*

A good job is where I do activities that I am prepared for. They are activities that I like to do and that make me feel important, happy, and satisfied. It should be a place that has a good working environment, good co-workers, and good pay.

A bad job is one that I do only for the pay. I had a bad experience at one job where the company only needed our hands to do the work. The hours were exhausting. They acted like we weren't humans but only machines.



*Maria L. Hernández, originally from Mexico, is an ESL student in Fayetteville, AR. She is a kind and compassionate person who has two sons. She wants to help them and be a good example for them. Maria enjoys bettering herself. She wants to learn English well so she can continue her studies.*

## What do you think?

Write down the qualities of a good and bad job. Revisit your list after reading some articles.

A good job:	A bad job:

**SOME QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE YOU READ**

As you read Maria's story and others in the magazine, think about *who decides*—if you are treated like a human or a machine, what your pay is, whether your job is good or bad? *Who should decide?*

# My Work as a Beautician

*Marie Constant*

I had a good job when I worked in a beauty salon and spa. It was a good job because I loved what I did and felt happy when my clients were satisfied. I got benefits, such as sick days, paid vacation, maternity leave, meals, and bonuses. I got good pay, too. It helped me with my bills. It was a good job because with this work I learned to be patient, calm, optimistic, and logical.

Well, it was also a bad job because it was so tiring. I spent a long time standing up. It was a very stressful workplace. Sometimes, the clients were difficult. They did not know what they really wanted. Another problem with the

job was that it took so much time. I never had time for my family. And I always finished so late. I was afraid to go back home in the night.



*Marie Constant studies ESL at the Center for Immigrant Education and Training at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY.*

## Talk about Yourself: Using the Present and the Past Tense

Fill in this verb chart. Practice with other pronouns, like she or he. Write down some rules or patterns that you notice. Write a story about a job experience you had in the past.

Present	Present (negative)	Past	Past (negative)
<b>Regular Verbs</b>			
I work	I do not work	I worked	I did not work
I finish			
I help			
I learn			
I earn			
I hate			
I love			
<b>Irregular Verbs</b>			
I have	I do not have	I had	I did not have
I get			
I feel			
I spend			
I am			
I apply			
I take			

# A Tale of Two Jobs

*Merly Locker*

My good job was when I was working at Ford Company, making the Ford Ranger trucks. I made good money and had good benefits and vacation time. I even had Election Day off. I got along with everybody. The place was clean and had air. I had a 30-minute lunch and two 20-minute breaks. It was a good job. It was a union job. The workers were nice because they didn't want to risk losing a good job.

My bad job was when I worked at Hartzell Manufacturing. It was not a union job, and the pay and benefits were not as good as Ford Company.

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**I cried when I went to work, and I cried when I got home from work.**

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My co-workers treated me so badly. They put bugs in my locker, threw my lunch in the garbage, and made bad comments about me when I walked by. They were mad because I had worked there for only one month, and I was promoted before them. Also, I was not a U.S. citizen at that time, so people were prejudiced against me.

After two months, I was ready to quit, but one person told me to report the problem to upper management. I did what she said. It got worse for me. I cried when I went to work, and I cried when

I got home from work. Finally, upper management investigated the incidents. They suspended six people from the floor and two supervisors. It was a long seven months before it got better. The people who were horrible to me were terminated for good. I thank God and the people who helped me.

I believe I was treated better at Ford because Ford was a more professional organization. The management had made a worker-friendly environment. The workers were better trained and cared more about keeping their jobs. When people are treated better and have a good job, they treat others better.




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**When people are treated better and have a good job, they treat others better.**

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*Merly Locker, originally from the Philippines, is a GED student at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College in New Richmond, WI.*

## For Discussion

**The author says,** “When people are treated better and have a good job, they treat others better.” What do you think of this comment? Share your own experiences (from work, family, or the community) where this observation proved true or not true.

**Have you ever had a union job?** If so, what was it like? How did it compare with non-union jobs you have had?

**Want to learn more about unions?** See the articles and boxes on pp. 48-52.

# A Job is a Job is a Job...Right? Wrong! We All Need Meaningful Work

S. Muhammad Hyland

**PRE-READING TERMS TO DISCUSS AND LOOK UP: LOATHED, BURDEN, AMERICAN DREAM, FUGITIVE, HAZED, CONCEDED, DEBILITATING, DEMORALIZING**

With the U.S. economy coming off of its worst recession since the Great Depression, millions of workers are being forced into taking jobs that they either abhor or are over-qualified for. Still, the need to provide for themselves and their families causes these workers to “take it on the chin” as their goal shifts from living to surviving.

## American Dream: False Promise?

Growing up in Philadelphia during the 1980s and 1990s, I didn’t just know poverty; I was poverty. And although I knew that in order to make it out

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**Too many times, I saw the looks of exhaustion and stress on the faces of my parents after they’d arrived home from work.**

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of the inner-city, I had to work, I loathed the idea of getting a job. Too many times, I saw the looks of exhaustion and stress on the faces of my parents after they’d arrived home from work. At home,

I’d hide at the top of the staircase and listen to my parents argue over finances. I can even remember a time when I actually blamed our family’s financial problems on me—believing that I was a burden, and if I had never been born, my family wouldn’t be in such dire straits. At such a young age, I understood the importance of money. I also understood that simply having a job wouldn’t necessarily pay the bills or make you happy.

The blatant contradictions hit me like a ton of bricks, and I seriously began to question the

idea of having a job. I questioned why my parents—both college graduates—were struggling to pay the bills. I questioned whether the American Dream was really possible—or was it a false promise? The very thought of one day having a job was, to say the least, extremely uninspiring.

## My First Job: A Failure

That dreaded nightmare became my reality once I started high school and realized that I’d have to get a job if I wanted to acquire the necessary material trappings—nice clothes, for example—that would make me more accepted at school.

The job was nothing major. I worked three days per week at a local supermarket. I made \$75 per week—not nearly enough—but I decided to see where this was going.

I hated the job! For \$75 per week, I had to mop up spills, collect fugitive shopping carts from huge parking lots, and get down on my hands and knees and scrub filth off of baseboards. It was less



*Unemployed and underemployed workers at the American Dream Movement Rally in October 2011. Creative Commons photo, David Sachs/SEIU. What kind of jobs do you think the people in this photo are rallying for? After watching his parents struggle, the author loses faith in “the American Dream.” What do you think about it?*

like a job and more like boot camp. I felt like I was being hazed! My co-workers felt the same way, and it was obvious that the poor morale created a hostile working environment. Nobody got along. We hated our jobs, and in fits of misdirected rage, we took our frustrations out on each other.

It was a very negative, stressful environment. I had to get out of it. One day, I decided not to show up. I never even picked up my final check.

### Finally Doing Something Fulfilling

Without a job to occupy my time, my mother – attempting to keep me out of trouble – insisted that I volunteer at a food bank that my aunt operated. I was wholly against the idea of working for free, but I conceded just to appease my mother.

After arriving at the food bank, my stomach turned in anxiety once I realized that I’d be doing almost the exact same thing that I was doing at the supermarket. But I gave it a shot. And I’m extremely thankful because it would turn out to be one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

I began to enjoy the work as I got to know the families coming to pick up food. I learned their personal stories of both tragedy and triumph. They, in turn, accepted me, and some even began referring to me as “son” and “brother.” I became so close to some of them that I often came in early to prepare their pick-ups. Sometimes, I would take my time putting their items together so I would be able to spend a few extra minutes with them. They were like family. And so were the people who I worked with. They were kind and easygoing, and I loved being around them.

I felt devastated when the food bank was shut down. We were like family at the food bank – different shapes, sizes, and colors, sure, but family.

Working at the food bank taught me to have compassion, understanding, and patience. I learned how to be open-minded. It was a stark contrast to the harsh and callous environment I was used to working in. No matter how desperate I get, I’d never work in that big fancy supermarket again. I would, however, go back to the food bank in a heartbeat! For no pay at all!

### A Job Should Help You Develop

We need to understand that while wages will undoubtedly be a factor in deciding whether or not we take a certain job, it shouldn’t be the deciding factor. A job shouldn’t feel like work. It should feel like life. It shouldn’t be depressing, debilitating, or demoralizing. It should be nurturing, substantive, and able to help a person develop true life skills and not just work skills.

I often look back at those days and smile at the fact that I – a person who was once fooled into nearly worshipping money – actually enjoyed working more for free than for a wage.

When economists, politicians, and humanitarians alike learn how to bridge that gap and create truly meaningful employment, people will stop looking at work as just a way to make ends meet. Instead, they’ll feel as if they’re playing a part in something truly special: the strengthening of humanity. And while a livable wage would still be a must, the overall benefits of meaningful work would be priceless. Then the world will finally be a better place.

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**A job shouldn’t feel like work. It should feel like life.**

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*S. Muhammad Hyland is 31 years old and has been in prison for 12 years. As a human rights activist and the son of a teacher, he believes that in order for us to change the world, we must create a more positive culture; and we could start by paying attention to our youth, who always tend to be neglected and not taken seriously. He has his GED and is working on getting his license in HVAC in a program at SCI Greene in Waynesburg, PA.*



**POST-READING: THE AUTHOR WRITES, “A JOB SHOULDN’T FEEL LIKE WORK. IT SHOULD FEEL LIKE LIFE.” DO YOU AGREE? WHY OR WHY NOT? HAVE YOU EVER HAD A JOB THAT “FELT LIKE LIFE”? IF NOT, CAN YOU IMAGINE SUCH A JOB?**

# Soaring Skyward with Heavy Lifts

David Frazier

My first job was “Hi-lift Operator” at Inland Steel in East Chicago, Indiana. I loaded stock and moved material too heavy for a worker to lift by hand. My occupation kept me on ground level, but my aspirations were high above where mill pigeons flew, next to the men who worked the giant cranes.

I often stood mesmerized watching those monstrosities inch along steel rails. The hot rail shoes created fiery sparks that floated softly downward like dancing fireflies. This was the job I wanted. This job was where I heard the mechanical music of cables straining and steel wheels squeaking as the giant crane easily lifted 200-ton iron ladles filled with molten metal skyward. It brought back memories of when I was a kid watching airplanes flying high in the clouds as the sun glistened off their silvery wings. I wanted to fly, and that crane would become my aircraft. I imagined myself sitting in the crane cab moving objects bigger than life. This was my ambition. This was my dream.

And then one day, it came to pass. I bid on that job, and I won. My dreams of man over machine – of controlling, moving, and manipulating heavy equipment – came true. I was a craneman. My dream of flying high in the skies of Inland Steel became a reality. My dream of lifting ladles and moving them from place to place like toys in a sandbox came true. Simply moving a lever in the cockpit of the gargantuan crane lifted tons of molten iron and made me feel like a kid again. This was the best job I ever had. It’s almost as good as the one I now have: retired. I still dream of flying everyday.

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*David Frazier is a student at Joblink in East Chicago, IN. He has been married for 40 years to his wife Kathie, and he has been taking writing classes ever since he retired in 2003.*





# Hell in a Steel Mill

*Maury Kleinman*

I worked at Inland Steel for 31 years as an electrician. We did everything from changing light bulbs to major rewiring. I loved being an electrician, but there was one job I hated: changing the hot rail shoes on the cranes.

The conditions on the hot rails were not pleasant. We worked in a repair basket, which was cramped and dirty and everything was covered with grease. Since the basket was open, you felt the heat and smelled the fumes from the mill. Sometimes it was over 150 degrees in the summer.

If it wasn't the heat making life miserable then it was gas fumes from the furnaces which accumulated under the ceiling of the mill. Everything was always covered in iron dust and you were wading in grease which would get all over you and ruin your clothes. Many times after repairing crane shoes, we'd throw out our clothes rather than try to clean them. It was almost impossible to get the grease out.

The worst crane to work on was 42 Crane in the main mill. Its repair area was almost directly over the furnaces so it was always hotter there than the other cranes. Sometimes the flames from the furnaces would shoot up to the crane rails, and it looked like a set of hands was trying to grab you and pull you down to hell. The hot metal burned you with no remorse. Changing the hot rail shoes on the cranes is definitely the worst job I ever had to do.

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*Maury Kleinman is a student at Joblink 2000 at Acer Mittal Steel in East Chicago, IN. He retired after 31 years at Inland Steel (now part of Acer Mittal Steel). The course he recently finished was "Everyone Has A Story."*



# It was Greasy, Wet, and Stinky Work (But the money was good.)

Nicole Amos-Collins

When I was 16 I had a horrible job in Arkansas cropping turkeys. It was disgusting in so many ways.

In order to crop a turkey, you first need to put your hand inside the turkey's neck, wrap your pinky finger around the windpipe and twist your pointer and middle finger around the crop (grit) bag tightly. The last thing you do is pull all of it down and out quickly and drop it in a trough of water.

This trough full of water was designed to keep moving because it was carrying away waste. The water seemed to slosh all over the place. If you were not splashing yourself with this disgusting water, someone was splashing you. No one told me that I would have shriveled toes at the end of every day.

The first day I went to work I could not get over how stinky turkeys are. Just thinking about that smell made it really hard to get up and go



to work. I would always shower before going home.

The floors were so greasy that you had to walk with caution. There were high pressure hoses to clean the floors during every break. The grease was so gross

it took me three years to be able to eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day. No one could understand why.

I made good money at this job. But no amount of money could make this job good or fun. No one enjoys cropping turkeys. It is greasy, wet, and stinky work. I will never go back.

*Nicole Amos-Collins is an explorer of life, a homemaker, a mother of two, and a student at Maple Woods Adult Education in Kansas City, MO. As a city girl doing a hard labor job in the country, the boss told her she could not handle the job. She is proud to say that she stayed for over six months.*



## Thought Experiment

Who should do the greasy, wet, and stinky work?

What is a fair way to share the "stinkiest" jobs?

# Should My Fingers Have to be Faster Than My Mind?

*Oswaldo Rodriguez*

I used to work as a cashier in a busy restaurant. I'm the kind of person that enjoys serving people and interacting with them, but I didn't realize how



**People were never satisfied. They were always in a rush and sometimes had an unpleasant attitude.**

hard this job would be.

The manager gave me a short training on how to use the cash register, and then they put me out there to start dealing with custom-

ers. Every day I had a lot of people in the line, and my fingers had to work fast so that I wouldn't keep them waiting. However, people were never satisfied. They were always in a rush, and sometimes they had an unpleasant attitude. Sometimes, customers tried to steal. They paid with a \$20 dollar bill and said they had given me \$50. I had to be patient with them and responsible for the money as well.

I was always under a lot of pressure. It's hard to stand up all day long. It's hard to complete every transaction without making any mistakes. The worst thing is trying to make everybody happy, but in the end you couldn't.

I don't want to say it was a bad job, but serving people really is a pain in the neck. I had a name tag on my shirt, and that made me more vulnerable to the customers. When they thought their orders had been delayed, they would report me to my boss. They didn't understand that there were a lot of people, and I was very busy. It seemed unfair for them to complain because I always made my best effort to serve them.

*Oswaldo Rodriguez is from Ecuador and has lived in NYC for 10 years. He is really grateful to the Workers United Education Program for the opportunity to improve his English.*

## Take It Further



**Describe what you see** in the photo on the left. Have you ever had a job where you served the public? What was it like?

**Many jobs require a wide range of skills.** What are the skills or conditions in your job (or one you had) that you did not anticipate?

**For the multi-level classroom!** Go to [www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras) and print out a version of this article geared toward beginning ESOL learners.

# The Best Job I Ever Had

*Timothy Lovett*

I don't think you ever forget your favorites in life, like your favorite teacher, or your childhood friends, or your first love. When I worked as an order selector at Hallmark Cards in Enfield, Connecticut, it was the best job I ever had. There were many reasons why I liked that job. The work was interesting, my colleagues were fun, the company was family oriented, and I believed in the product. These elements added up to an unforgettable experience and a lifetime of friendships.

## Like Bees in a Beehive

At the Hallmark warehouse, we filled multiple customer orders by using a "selecting" process. We would get our orders and push-carts and set off on a trek around the warehouse tracking down cards for our customers. I am sure if you looked

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**By the end of the day, we might have walked eight to ten miles and selected thousands of cards.**

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down from the top of the warehouse, we all looked like bees in a beehive, scrambling back and forth from the order desk to the selecting aisles.

When we were done with our order, we pushed our box onto a conveyor, and the box would ride high above the warehouse, zigzagging its way through an industrial matrix before reaching the shipping area and being loaded onto a truck. By the end of the day, we might have walked eight to ten miles and selected thousands of cards.

## Family Friendly Business

There are not many companies that provide flexibility to manage your work life and personal life simultaneously, but Hallmark is such a company. Let's say that your child is a student in middle school, and the carpool falls on you this week,

but you have to work from 7AM to 3PM. Hallmark has a program called "Mother Hours." This allows you to tailor your work schedule around your life, so you could go to work at 6AM and leave at 8AM to bring the neighborhood children to school and return to work by 9:30 AM. Then you would stay until 4:30 PM to make up the hours you missed. I wish more companies did this.

My favorite event is "bring your child to work day." When I was a kid, I always wanted to go to work with my father, but I was never allowed to, so I never got to see what he did for a living. When I became a father, I wanted to show my children what I did for a living. When I got the chance to do this, I was like a kid on Christmas. I think I was more excited than my son. I couldn't wait to get him in that warehouse and show it off. My co-workers felt the same way because the warehouse was flooded with children. By the end of the day, the children filled orders, ate a few doughnuts, and my son got to see how I paid for his video games.

## Good Co-Workers

I think it is important to like the people you work with because it makes the day go by faster and makes work palatable. When Hallmark hires, they usually hire the family and friends of employees because they believe that if they hire good people, those people have surrounded themselves with other good people. Judging by the work environment, they are correct. I loved my co-workers. They became my friends and my family, and I still have relationships with most of them. Those people played important roles in my life. We celebrated birthdays, we took trips together, and I even watched two of my co-workers get married.



I have never before met a group that I enjoyed so much, and that is another plus for Hallmark's hiring practices.

### Believe in the Product

It is very important to believe in the company that you work for and the product or services it provides. Hallmark makes and sells cards, and cards can be a beautiful tool for supporting human relationships. Let's say a guy is attracted to a woman, but he doesn't know the right words to say to her; a card may be the difference between "just friends" and "until death do us part." The "Lordy, lordy; guess who's forty?" card can add humor to getting older. The "I'm sorry card" expresses the most poetic way of saying I messed up, and I want to make it right. Cards bring people together because they carry warmth and depth. When the sender writes a personal message inside of a card, it enhances the sentiment and gives the card power.

Hallmark Cards is the last of a dying breed: they believe in making work a positive experience, supporting families, and bringing people closer together. Hallmark products make people happy and feel relevant. It was my pleasure to work for them; I made many friends and even more great memories. They say if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life, so I guess I didn't work at all in my four-year Hallmark career, and I do feel a little guilty for receiving all those paychecks. Maybe I'll send them a Thank You card.

**They say if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.**

*Timothy Lovett is an aspiring comedian/writer out of Springfield, Massachusetts by way of Lorain, OH. He hopes to start college in the spring of 2013 to study computer networking and IT security.*

### Take It Further

**"If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life."** Discuss this idea. Have you ever had a job that didn't feel like work? If yes, describe it. If not, imagine what such a job could be.

**Hallmark offered "Mother Hours."** Some companies call this "flex time." Write down a schedule that would work for you. Is flex time important to you?

**Express gratitude!** The author appreciates Hallmark so much, he says at the end of his article that maybe he'll send them a Thank You card. Do you have an employer, mentor, or friend who has helped you in your work life? Write him or her a Thank You card. Be specific about what you are grateful for.



# Sweet Scents, Customer Satisfaction, and Tips Made this a Good Job

Lynette Clark

(See the next page for a version of this article accessible to beginner ESOL learners.)

Out of all of the jobs I have had, working at Corner Bakery was my favorite. I was able to do things that I love, such as bake and design cakes and cookies. I got the satisfaction of pleasing my regular customers as well as meeting new people when we catered large events. Even though there was sometimes a lot of hustle and bustle at Corner Bakery, working there was very rewarding.

## Smelling Sweet Scents

One of the things I liked most about working at Corner Bakery was baking and decorating the cakes and cookies. While baking, I enjoyed smelling the sweet scents of the spices that would fill the air. When the cakes and cookies were finished baking, I was able to be creative as I decorated them with icing and different candies and then placed them in bags that I tied with pretty ribbons.

## Do the Math

**How do you figure tips? At restaurants, you are supposed to leave a 15% tip. How do you figure out what 15% is? Share your strategies. Practice!**



**Let's say counter help gets 5% of the total receipts of the day. If the company sold \$3000 worth of food, how much would the counter help make in tips? If there are 6 employees, and they split the tips evenly, how much would each person make in tips?**

## Seeing Satisfied Customers

After I finished bagging the products, I set them out in display baskets for the customers to view. It was a good feeling seeing customers choosing and buying what I had made, and it felt especially good when customers would return and tell me how much they enjoyed what they had tasted.



## Tips and Thanks

Some customers gave me tips. One of my regular customers, Ms. Lorraine, regularly bought our mini-pack cookies. Every other Friday she came in on her lunch break to pick them up. Although I sometimes was very busy, I made sure that she got her cookies. If it happened that we were out of cookies in the display baskets, I would ask her to wait while I put a bag together for her. She always thanked me and let me know that she and her children enjoyed the cookies. Her appreciation was a kind of good-feeling reward, but she also gave me gifts and nice tips around the holidays.

## Special Events

Sometimes, Corner Bakery would get hired to cater an event. It was exciting to set up at different locations. At the fancier events, I set the tables with beautiful table cloths, and I would make the tables look elegant by setting the silverware

and glasses “just so.” After setting up the tables, I often had time to enjoy the events and meet new people. Once, I met the famous singer, Usher. I got to shake his hand, take pictures with him, and he also tipped very well. Meeting celebrities was definitely a nice part of working for Corner Bakery.

### A Lasting Impression

It has been a few years since I worked at the Corner Bakery. I had to move, and I needed to find a job closer to my new home; however, I don’t think

that I will ever forget some of my former customers and the sweet scents baking and decorating cakes at the Corner Bakery. It was a great place to work and left a lasting impression on my life.

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*Lynette Clark is a single mother and student enrolled in the GED program at West Georgia Technical College. She credits her children for inspiring her to go back to school. She thanks her instructor, Mr. Doney, for encouraging her to submit an essay to The Change Agent. She says, “Having my article selected for publication has already given my confidence quite a boost and has encouraged me to continue pressing forward even more strongly.”*

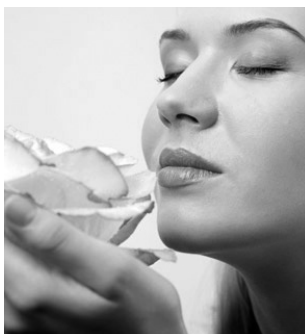
## My Favorite Job

*Lynette Clark*

*(This version is for beginning ESOL learners.)*



*Working at Corner Bakery was my favorite job.*



*I loved to smell the cookies and cakes.*



*I enjoyed decorating cakes.*



*I felt happy when the customers bought what I made.*



*They gave me tips and said, “Thank you.”*



*Sometimes we worked at special events. I made the tables look beautiful.*



*At one event, I met Usher. He is a famous singer.*



*Corner Bakery was a great place to work. Now I am studying for the GED.*

# Mister Larry, The Daycare Chef

Larry Richardson

When I was a little boy, I watched my grandmother cook. The food tasted so good that it made me want to become a cook. So when I was about 19, I started working in small restaurants as a busboy, then a line cook, and a finally a chef. My grandmother is why I became a chef; I love good cooking – especially cooking for other people.

## Nutritious Food for Children

Currently I work as the chef for a daycare center. One of the most important ways to express my care for the children is to feed them healthy and

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**I believe that what God created we must take care of, especially the children.**

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nourishing food. Nutritious food supports children’s brains and bodies. When I cook for the children in the daycare center, it makes me feel good about myself because I know that I am doing something good for them; this is why I love my job

at the daycare center. I believe that what God created we must take care of, especially the children.

## Teaching about Healthy Food

Being part of this program gives me a chance to help the parents with their children’s health. One of my greatest joys is when I go upstairs and teach

the children about nutrition. The teachers and I eat meals with them. The children see me eating foods they might not want to try. I tell them how I made it and how it will make them strong and smart.

I talk to them about the foods we are serving. I show them pictures of how it looks before I cook it. I teach them how to measure ingredients, how to pick out healthy colors of vegetables, and how to cook in the most nutritious way. Kids need to learn early to eat healthy foods so they will do this their whole life.

This is a good job. It is not just any job. But it is not valued. Day care workers should get higher pay, sick days, personal days, job security, and paid vacations. I am feeding the children so they can grow up to be what they desire to be in the healthiest body possible. It is important work!



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*Larry Richardson is a student at the Adult Learning Center Mid-Manhattan: #5 in New York City. Larry was born in Dillon, SC at home by the fireplace with the care of a midwife. He came to NYC at the age of two. His goal is to earn his GED and become a head chef by continuing to upgrade his culinary skills.*

## Share and Discuss

**Larry’s grandmother was his mentor.** Share a story about someone who mentored you.

**According to the author,** taking care of children is important, but undervalued, work. Do you agree? Why or why not? State one thing a society should do to take care of its children.

**Who is the end-user** of the work you do or hope to do? (For Larry, it is the children at his daycare who eat his cooking.) How does the end-user affect how you feel about your work?



# Taking Care of People Gives Me Joy

*Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu*

I work in a nursing home as a Certified Nursing Assistant. I assist the nurses and the doctors. In this nursing home, the people are mostly the elderly who are sick and are unable to help themselves. I see these elderly as my parents. So, when I am there with them, it gives me joy to take care of them and answer their calls.

## Able to Ask for Help

My nursing home recently hired more workers because there are so many patients and they have so

**I see these elderly as my parents. So, when I am there with them, it gives me joy to take care of them.**

many needs. Now I have many co-workers to interact with. This makes the work easy and more fun. I am able to ask them for help, especially in transferring patients from the wheel chair to the bed and from the bed to the wheel chair.

## Gaining Life Skills

Working at the nursing home has taught me a lot of skills that help me in my everyday life. For example, I know how to help my mom who had

a partial stroke. I walk her to the toilet, and I know how to sit her on the chair so that she won't fall. Also, at my church I help a woman who walks with a cane because she is disabled. Every time she comes to church, she looks for me to help her walk into the church and then to the toilet before I take her to sit in her favorite seat.



## Bringing Me Joy

The nursing home is a good job because it allows me to take care of the elderly and the sick who are unable to do things for themselves. I like helping people. It is my passion. I don't have any regrets about this work because it gives me such joy.

*Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu is a student at the Brooklyn Adult Learning Center in NY. Chibuzo was a teacher for many years, but she changed her profession when she came to the United States. She loves math, writing, and being in school to study to get her GED and go to college. She is grateful to be here in the U.S. and for her wonderful teachers, who are always there to help her.*

## Write about It

**Pick a topic below and write a paragraph.** Remember to include a topic sentence, at least two supporting details, and a concluding sentence.

- Explain why Chibuzo likes her job. Use quotes from the article.
- Explain why you like or don't like taking care of people. Be specific.
- Describe a kind of work that gives you joy and explain why. Be specific.

**Share your paragraph with others.** Get feedback from several sources. Re-write your paragraph, incorporating feedback that is helpful.

# My Fulfilling Job as a Social Worker

*Maria Irma Blanco*

The best job in my life was when I worked as a social worker in Bogotá, Colombia. I worked for a program that helped children who were abandoned to live in the street because their families were addicted to drugs. We invited the children to enter the program, which has 10 houses where they can live and learn a craft.

I loved my career because I was helping people. I picked up kids from the streets and invited them to our institution where they could live. We asked them, “What do you need? What is the solution to your problems?”

I personally attended to the children’s needs. For example, I got them medical and dental appointments. I helped find important documents, like birth certificates. And I helped the children deal with the most difficult question: “Where is your family?”

My salary was very good and had all the benefits of being a government employee. My co-workers were very nice, and we had good relationships. When I finished my eight-hour day, I felt satisfaction. I knew I was helping these children have a better future. And I was growing too and learning many things.

It was difficult and sad to have to leave that job because I came to the United States with my kids. I worked for 20 years at that hard job. I dedicated myself to it, and that fulfills me.



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*Maria Irma Blanco studies ESL at the Center for Immigrant Education and Training at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY. She has applied to college and intends to study occupational therapy.*

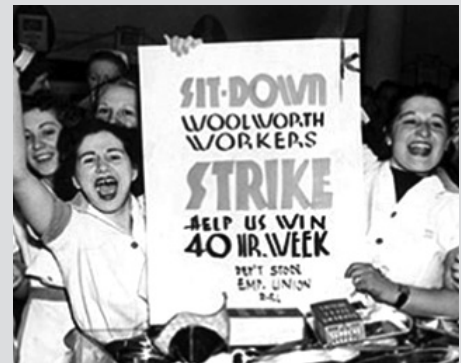
## Eight-Hour Day

**Did you know?** In 1890, when the government first tracked workers’ hours, the average work week for full-time manufacturing employees was 100 hours.

**Today, an eight-hour work day** is considered normal. How do you think a 40-hour work week became the new normal? Is it, in fact, “normal” for everyone? What types of jobs or workers might not have a 40-hour work week?

**Research:** Use the internet to look up the history of the 8-hour day. Find out what today’s average work week is for U.S. workers and for workers in other countries.

**Source:** [www.pbs.org/livelihood/workday/weekend/8hourday.html](http://www.pbs.org/livelihood/workday/weekend/8hourday.html)

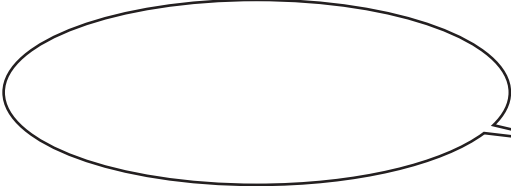

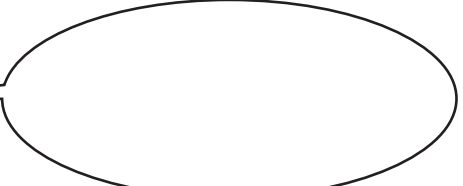
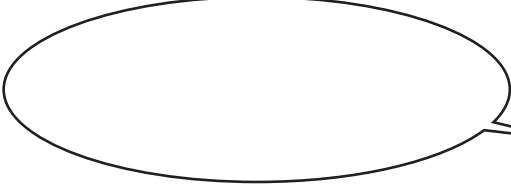

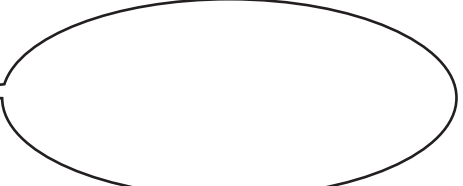
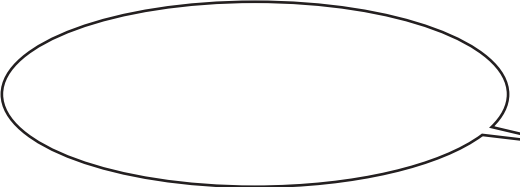

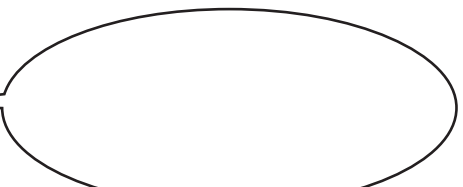
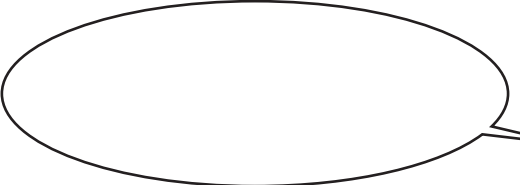

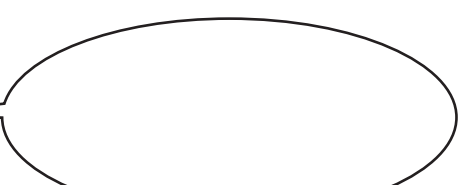
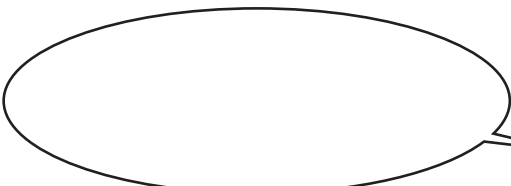

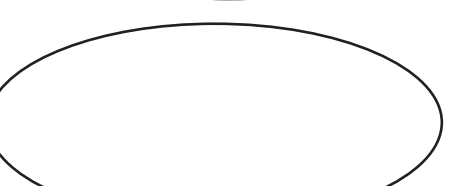
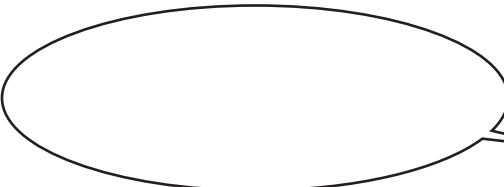

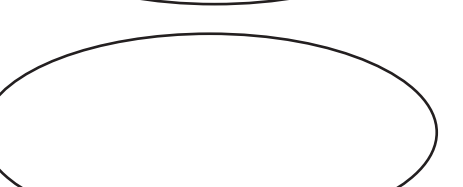


*“8 hours for work, 8 hours for rest and 8 hours for what you will” was a slogan of the Eight-Hour Day movement.*

# Review What You've Read

## What Do People Like and Not Like about Their Work?

Look at the articles on pp. 1-18 and find these writers. In the left "bubble," list something the writer liked and on the right, something s/he didn't like about his or her job. Identify patterns in what people like and don't like. Make a poster featuring people in your class and what they like and dislike about work.

# “I Must Say!”

## Using Poetry to Jumpstart Student Writing

Hillary Gardner

### Porter

by Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

I must say  
Yes, sir,  
To you all the time.  
Yes, sir!  
Yes, sir!  
All my days  
climbing up a great big mountain  
Of yes, sirs!

Rich old white man  
Owns the world.  
Gimme yo’ shoes  
To shine.

Yes, sir!

**Source:** *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* edited by Arnold Rampersad (Vintage Classics, 1995). Quoted here under fair use as explained in *Code of Best Practices of Fair Use for Poetry*, p. 11.

### Use “Porter” as a Model

By helping us see the details of the daily grind in a new way, poetry and metaphor can help us write about our own life challenges and frustrations at work and elsewhere. Langston Hughes’s poem, “Porter,” is written in the voice of a porter speaking about his job. Try using this poem as a springboard for your own writing.

In “Porter” we hear the voice of a man who knows what he must say in certain situations. This is the voice we adopt whenever we have to climb “a great big mountain” of politeness. There is both anger and defiance in his repeated use of “Yes, sir!” What are the phrases you use repeatedly on



your job? What are the “great big mountains” you have to “climb” at work?

### Try Writing Your Own Poem

1. First, read “Porter” as a class. Discuss the use of metaphor (“great big mountain”), figurative speech (“owns the world”), and repetition. Read the student’s poem (which is modeled on “Porter”) on the next page.
2. Then take a few minutes to “free write” about some things you must say or do on the job. Try to incorporate metaphors, figurative speech, and repetition. (Free writing means “keep your pen moving.” Do not worry about spelling or handwriting. Corrections come later.)
3. Revise your writing, shaping it into a poem.
4. If you feel comfortable, share your poem. Ask your listeners or readers, “What do you remember?” or “What stood out?”
5. Revise your poem based on the feedback if it is helpful. Revise again and try reading it out loud.

**1000 USES**

I have to do a lot of work.

I must

- bookkeep
- fax orders
- check mail
- organize paperwork
- answer the phone
- type orders
- prepare coffee
- compute staff information

For you all the time.

Every day from 9 to 4,

I have to jump obstacles,

Like the customer’s sense of humor.

Everything has to be on time.

Speak to me in different languages.

A computer freezes.

Oh yes, Sir! Oh yes, Sir!

Rich old Lebanese men

Own the factory of auto parts of cars sold  
around the Middle East.

Give me your orders.

Oh yes, Sir! Oh yes, Sir!

But at the end of the week

I receive my pay for my hard work.

Even though for them I am a woman.

Now I must enjoy my life!

*The author was a student in Elizabeth Riker’s class at the Center for Immigrant Education and Training, La Guardia Community College in NY. Elizabeth is the author of “So You Want to be an ESL Teacher.” Hillary Gardner is the ESOL Professional Development Coordinator at CUNY Adult Literacy Program in NY.*

**Your Poem**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Learn more** about Pullman Porters at <[www.paulwagnerfilms.com/miles-of-smiles-about-porters](http://www.paulwagnerfilms.com/miles-of-smiles-about-porters)>.

**For a brief biography** of Langston Hughes (pictured right), visit <[www.americaslibrary.gov](http://www.americaslibrary.gov)> and go to “Meet Amazing Americans.”



# What Inspires Me to Become an Architect

David Colon

When I was 19 years old, I went to work in construction with my older brother. At first it seemed hard and exhausting, but when I got used to it and learned the basics, it became easy and exciting. When you are building something, it's hard to imagine what the finished product will look like. But once I started to see how beautiful the buildings turned out, I knew I wanted to become an architect.

At the beginning I was a laborer. I had to clean up behind more skilled workers, such as carpenters, welders, and painters. I carried steel doors and equipment up flights of stairs. Once they saw that I was a good laborer, they started to teach me other things, such as how to build cabinets, put

up sheet rock, paint professionally, and weld. As I learned more skills, I saw how beautifully my work came out. I said to myself, "I want to be an architect." Today I am working hard to reach that goal.



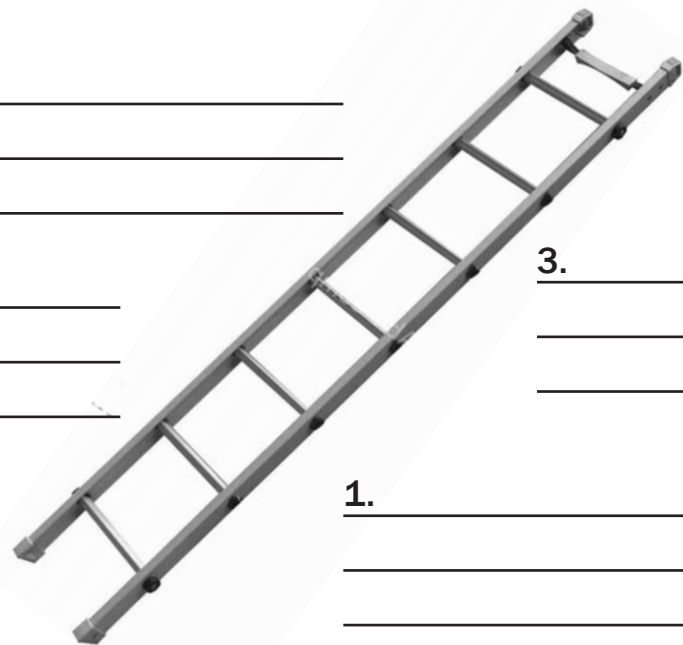
David Colon is a student at the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center #5 in New York City. He is from the Upper West Side of Manhattan and is the proud father of a 16 year old daughter. He is a supervisor for a major clothing chain in New York City.

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Career Ladder**



1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the steps David Colon has taken, is taking, and probably will need to take if he wants to become an architect? Use information from the article, his biography, and what you know. Describe the steps on your own career ladder. See Resources on p. 33 for more direction.

# My Ideal Job: Keeping Mexican Culture Alive Through Dance

*María Aracely Morales*

I would like to have my own school of Mexican dance because I think it is very important to teach our children about their culture and to share our culture with others. Teaching dance would be an ideal job for me because I would be earning money and doing something I love and something that is

**Teaching dance is a dream that I have had all my life, but so far I have done it only as a volunteer.**

important for our community.

Teaching dance is a dream that I have had all my life, but so far I have done it only as a volunteer.

For example, four years ago my son's teacher asked if I wanted to teach dance for Cinco de Mayo—which is a day of celebration of Mexican heritage and pride. Because the children were bilingual, it did not matter that

I could not speak English very well. I was very surprised that the children were so happy dancing and wearing the Mexican dresses.

I also taught Mexican dance to American children who did not speak Spanish. The children quickly understood the music and the dance, and they were very happy on Cinco de Mayo with their Mexican dresses. The children's American parents took a lot of pictures of them.

I'm very excited by how people of other races and cultures liked our Mexican culture. Now I'm teaching more than 50 elementary school students the same dance every year for the Cinco de Mayo. Also, in my community's Catholic Church, I teach 40 children for the cultural festival.

My experience as a teacher and my connections in the community should make it possible for me to open my own school of Mexican dance. This is the job I would like. To achieve this dream, I will need to investigate what permissions I need so I can run a small dance studio at my house. Then I have to choose how many days in a week I can teach dancing and invite people to attend. Perhaps I will give people the option to take the first class for free, and then I would ask for a monthly payment that is reasonable.



*Children dance wearing traditional Mexican dresses.*

*María Aracely Morales is married and has two children—Oscar, 12 years old, and Ayleen, 7 years old. She attends advanced ESL classes at the University of New Mexico in Valencia and plans to continue her studies.*

# From Dishwasher to Chef

Elder Lopez

My first job in the United States was working in an Italian restaurant. I worked as a dishwasher, washing the pots and pans. I didn't like it, but I figured it was an opportunity to eventually realize my dreams, so I did it.

I remember one Saturday night that was crazy busy. The manager asked me to do something for him, but I didn't speak much English at that time.

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**The manager got angry with me because I didn't understand anything he said. I felt so sad and angry, but the experience made me think.**

---

The manager got angry with me because I didn't understand him. I felt so sad and angry, but the experience made me think. I told myself that I was going to try hard to learn English and never give up. I have

always believed that everything happens for a reason, which helped me decide to take that event and make a change.

I found a school where I could study English in the mornings and continue to work at night. It

wasn't easy, but I took the challenge. I always try to work hard and to learn something new every day, so that kept me going. I discovered my passion for cooking and my goal to one day become a restaurant chef, and I was able to make my dream a reality.

I feel proud of myself because I still work in the same restaurant where I started as a dishwasher, but now I am one of the chefs. I am even good friends with the manager who was so angry with me on that Saturday night. Although I like what I do now, I still have a lot of other dreams to realize, which keeps me motivated to continue my education.



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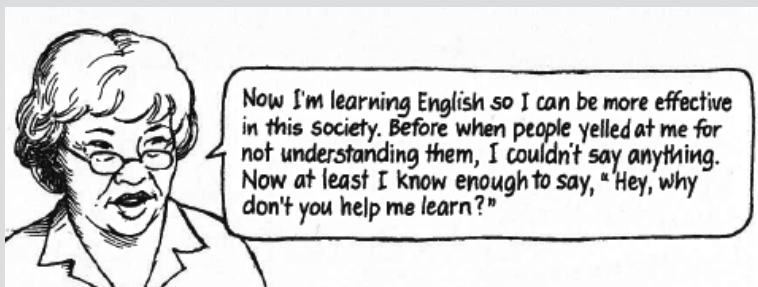
*Elder Lopez came to the U.S. from Guatemala when he was 16 years old. He is a student at the Methuen Adult Learning Center in Methuen, MA. He says, "Life is like a camera. Just focus on what's important and capture the good times. Develop from the negative and if things don't work out, just take another shot."*

## What Would You Do?

**Someone yells at you** because you don't understand them. What did Elder do when that happened to him? What does the woman in the cartoon do? What can you say or do?

**Elder describes** a difficult situation that motivated him to make a change. Share a time that happened to you.

**What questions** do you have about how to move your career forward? Who can you ask?



Source: *Problem Posing at Work*. Used with permission from Grass Roots Press.



# “Daniel of All Trades”

*Daniel J. Suarez*

When I was 16, I painted my neighbor’s house to get money for my little sister. There was no food in my house, my mother didn’t work, and we had no father, so I decided to watch over my little sister. I found that I loved the feeling of completing a job, and also the money was not bad. With what I earned on that job I was able to feed my sister and get her clothes for school.

I like to do different kinds of odd jobs. I am able to paint, install any kind of flooring, replace roofs, toilets, sinks, tubs, and counters, do general repair work and maintenance, and do auto/truck mechanics. My goal is to start a handyman business called “Daniel of All Trades.”

I will need to borrow money to finance my business. In order to do that I will need to establish my credit by opening a bank account and paying my bills on time. I will research interest rates at different banks to get a loan for my business. I will also consider looking for investors. Some of the teachers I had in high school really believed in me and would help me with anything that I needed. Maybe they would consider investing in my new business. I will need to hire an attorney to do the legal paperwork for

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**I found that I loved the feeling of completing a job, and also the money was not bad.**

---

my business.

The most important pieces of equipment that I will need for my handyman business are a phone, tools, and a truck to carry heavy equipment

to the job sites. Once I am financially secure, I can buy more equipment such as a lift and jacks. I will need to buy computer software to use for billing and keeping records of clients, expenses, insurances, licenses, and taxes.

Right now I am 21 years old and working at odd jobs most of the time, as well as going to Read to Succeed to improve my reading, spelling, and writing. Then I plan to study mechanics in community college. While I am going to school, I will continue working at odd jobs. I hope to establish “Daniel of All Trades” before I am 30. With this business I will be able to ensure my sister’s future by providing for her and helping out my family whenever they are in need.




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*Daniel J. Suarez is a student at Read to Succeed in Hartford, CT. He describes himself as “always tired, always working.” His plan is to return to Capital Community College in Hartford and earn a degree in general studies and mechanics.*

## Name Your Business!

**Brainstorm a list of your skills.** Use the chart on p. 35 to help you create an inventory of the things you can do. What name would you give your business?

**Want to be your own boss?** Read the articles on pp. 26-27 to learn about other adult learners who started their own business and run it cooperatively.

**Thinking about starting a small business?** Look here for more info.: <[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)>.

# “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.

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



# “We Can Do It”

## Creating a Women’s Cleaning Cooperative

Luz Maria Hernandez

### **What is “We Can Do It”?**

“We Can Do It” is a cooperative of women. We clean people’s houses and offices.

### **What is a cooperative?**

A cooperative is a business that is run by the workers. We make the decisions. We support each other. We work together as a group, and we are getting to know one another. It’s the best thing that has ever happened to me.

### **How did it start?**

We were in an ESOL class at the Center for Family Life in Brooklyn. We wanted to work. Some of us had jobs, but our employers did not always treat us fairly. We wanted a cooperative so we could get fair wages and make our own schedules. The people at the Center informed us that we could create a cooperative business. If we worked as a cooperative business, we could have living wages and flexible schedules.

### **Do you have leaders?**

We don’t have leaders. We have a leadership committee. The committee changes every year.

### **How do you make decisions?**

Sometimes, some of us have ideas. We talk about the ideas, and we go forward with the best ideas. Usually, we agree by consensus that an idea is good, but sometimes we decide by voting.

### **What do you like best about working in a cooperative?**

I work less time, I meet different people, and the clients treat us better. Also, I like to work in a group. I like to listen to the other members.



### **What is most challenging about it?**

The challenge is to get more work for the members in the cooperative that need it.

Another challenge is to find more time to spend with our children.

### **How is your cooperative being affected by the economic crisis?**

Some of our members do not have as much work. They have to look for new clients.

### **What does the cooperative do if a member does not have work?**

We try to share the clients so that everyone has work. We also look at why someone is losing clients. Maybe the clients are not happy because the work is not being done well. In that case, we try to help the worker do a better job.

### **Are you in an English class?**

Yes, I am taking an English class. It’s important to study English, if you have the opportunity. For me, it’s very difficult because sometimes at work I can’t express myself well and I would really like to express myself well.

### **How do you find time to study English?**

I receive support from my husband. He takes care of my daughter when I go to my English classes.

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*Luz Maria Hernandez is an ESOL student at Center for Family Life in Brooklyn, NY.*

# 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



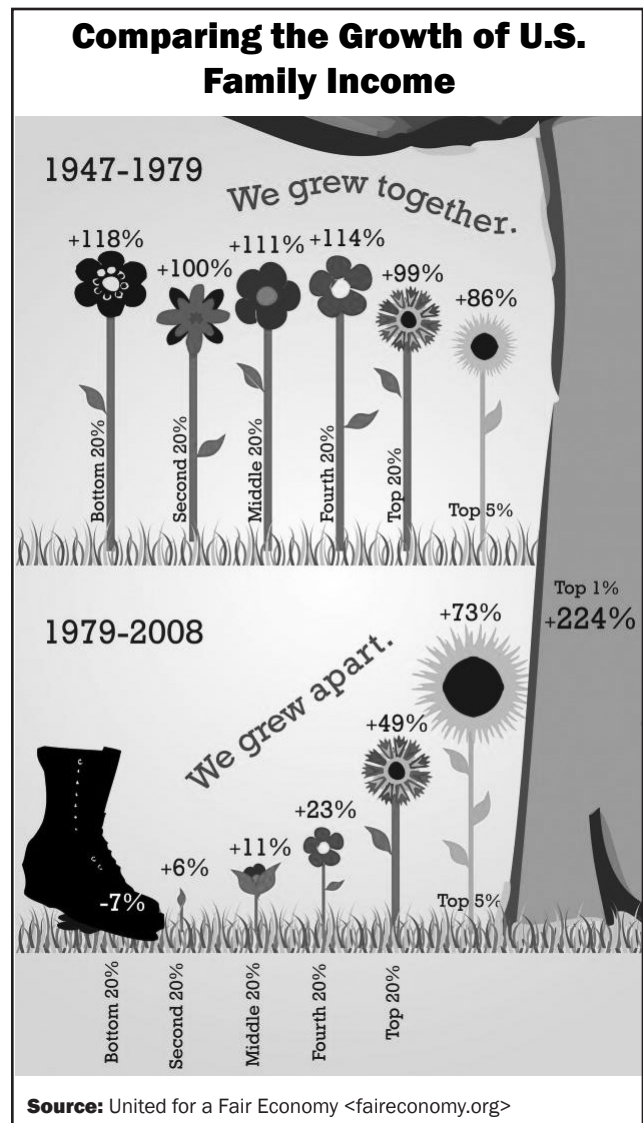
just started laughing, and he said, “I’m glad the agency gave you an opportunity and so did I.” This made me realize that if there is something in life that you want to achieve, you’ve got to go for it; don’t get discouraged. That sounds like a happy ending to my story, but things got complicated.

### 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 Negron 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.

# Have a Criminal Record? You Can Still Find a Pathway to a Career

Lashon Amado

For those labeled as “criminals,” the path to success can seem impossible. Having a criminal record carries a stigma and there are other barriers that make it hard for ex-offenders to pursue the career of their dreams.

How do I know? I’ve been there. Growing up in Brockton, I was a product of my environment. I had adopted the street mentality and became a rebel in society. I have been stabbed, locked up, and sold drugs to survive in the streets. It was a vicious cycle that I realized had to be broken.

I discovered YouthBuild, a national organization that helps young people gain the skills and education they need to leave street life. Through the YouthBuild chapter in Brockton, I got my GED, and shortly after I gained some college credits. I was trying to make a change in my life, but my criminal background was a huge barrier. I was



*In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work full-time for 6 to 24 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. Photo from Birmingham, Alabama, YouthBuild.*



being turned down left and right by potential employers even after successfully passing the interview process. Once employers found out that I had a criminal record, they essentially slammed the door in my face.

Although the path to a career is more difficult for ex-offenders, it is still possible. I have found that there are three important steps you can take to build your credibility within your community and with employers: Education, Volunteer Services, and Discipline and Honesty.

## Education

They can take away your freedom, in most cases temporarily, but they can never take away your education. Education has a huge impact on your ability to succeed. Most importantly, it gives you the skills you need to get a good job. Furthermore, research shows that as offenders get more education, their chance of re-offending decreases. Employers will see from your educational background that you are indeed a hard worker; they might be less judgmental of your criminal record and more likely to give you a chance.

## Volunteering

Volunteering is another method to gain transferable skills and build credibility. The job market is tough even for those who do not have criminal histories. Even entry-level jobs require previous experience. The best way to get your foot in the door is to do some volunteer work in the community. Volunteering not only provides you with an opportunity to gain experience, it highlights your character. It shows that you are headed in the right direction, and it will appeal to employers.

## Discipline and Honesty

When an employer has to make a decision on whether to hire someone with a criminal background they feel they are taking a risk. They wonder whether you will commit another crime, possibly on the job. The best way to deal with this situation is to advocate for yourself and explain to your prospective employer that you have “changed.” But your words alone are not enough. You need to show examples of ways you have been held accountable (such as in school or as a volunteer) and you have delivered on your promises.

Sometimes it is enough to let time work its magic. If years have passed since you were last involved in crime, then your employer may give you the benefit of the doubt.

No matter what, you must be honest with your future employers. You must disclose any past criminal involvement in order for you to be able to build trust. Although it may be hard and embarrassing to disclose such information, you should do it anyway. Coming to terms with your mistakes and being honest about them is key to bringing about change. If you are in denial about it, then you won’t make much progress.

## Don’t Give Up

The road to getting a career for ex-offenders is a tough one. In order to succeed, you must be able to put up a good fight and never give up. You must be able to step out of your comfort zone. All the methods of proving yourself to society may be strange to you. You may have never been acquainted with the college experience, understood the value of volunteer services, or had the willpower to resist instant gratification and refrain from crime. But with hard work and dedication, you can do it. Do not let your past mistakes define who you are.

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*Lashon Amado graduated from YouthBuild in Brockton, MA. He completed a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice at UMASS Boston and is now working on a Master’s degree in Sociology.*

**Source:** Smith, L., Tracy, A., & Steurer, S., US Dept. of Education, (2001). Three state recidivism study. <[www.ceanational.org/PDFs/3StateFinal.pdf](http://www.ceanational.org/PDFs/3StateFinal.pdf)>.

## What Else Might Help? CORI Reform!

*CORI stands for Criminal Offender Record Information.*

In Massachusetts, the Commonwealth CORI Coalition has fought for and won a new law that will reform CORI in the following ways:

First, landlords and employers will now only be able to see *conviction* data. This will prevent people from being denied housing and jobs for crimes they were charged with but did not commit.

Second, the new law will dramatically reduce the time it takes before one’s record is sealed from public view. Previously, it took 15 years after parole to seal the record of a felony, and 10 years after a misdemeanor. Now it will take only 10 years for a felony and 5 for a misdemeanor.



*Members of the Commonwealth CORI Coalition fought for and won CORI reform. What do you think about the new law? In the photo above, what do they mean when they say, “CORI imprisons whole families”?*

**Source:** <[exprisoners.org](http://exprisoners.org)>

# Things are Forever Changing

Ruth Wilmore

## Unemployed After 26 Years of Working

I am a single mom. I quit school after completing the 11th grade. I had to get a job or starve. For the first 10 years after I left school, I worked as a machine operator on the line fashioning children's garments. For the next 16 years after that, I did specialty garments and samples. I spent 26 years at that job, and then it just disappeared into another country. Yes, they shipped our work offshore. And now there is a change taking place in my life.

When you lose your job and you have someone who depends on you, you have to make a choice. Do you give up or do you say to yourself, "Well, I'm not going to let this beat me. I'm going to do something."

## Finding Resources for Training and Education

I went to the Employment Security Commission and met with an agent. He told me that the Department of Aging had a program to help older citizens find a new job. I said, "Thank you, God!"

They placed me in a Title V program, and soon I was working at a hospice and palliative care facility. This is a place that people come to spend their last days on earth. The families can come in and stay overnight. It has large parlors and a dining area. It's a home away from home for the dying and their families.

This is an awesome place to work. The nurses and volunteers give so much care and love. They are there for their patients' every need. The nurses are wonderful, and the facility is beautiful. I am trained to work as a receptionist. At the front desk, I get to meet so many wonderful people.

## Moving Forward!

I work on weekends. This allows me to go to Rowan-Cabarrus Community College (RCCC). I am

getting my GED. Normally, my job requires employees to have their GED. But through the Title V program, I have the opportunity to work while getting my GED. Going back to school is something that I have been trying to do for the past 20 years. Losing my job was a blessing in disguise because if I had not lost my job, I would have not been at the Employment Security Commission (ESC). They would not have directed me to this program, and I would not be in the position that I am in now.

The challenge is great, but I'm up for the change. From here on out, who knows what will happen...I may be president of my own company!

Ruth Wilmore is a student at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in NC. She is working towards her GED and wants to continue her work in hospice. She has a 22-year-old son who also attends RCCC. He does not mind his mom attending the same school as him!



## What About You?

**Ruth went to the Department of Aging for resources and support. Where could you go? See the next page for ideas.**

**Talk about a time you experienced a "blessing in disguise."**

**Who pays for programs like Title V? Brainstorm ideas about how job creation and job training should happen.**

**Investigate further.** See the article on p. 46 about the role of taxes. And check out <robinhoodtax.org> for more ideas.



# Resources

Compiled by Yssa Santos

**CAREERPATH.COM** is a career resource center that will assist you in making the right career decisions. [www.careerpath.com](http://www.careerpath.com)

**CAREER TESTS** are the first stage of career planning. They help individuals determine which career opportunities best match their interests, personality, aptitude, IQ, or other characteristics. [www.livecareer.com/career-test](http://www.livecareer.com/career-test)

**THE MAPP** is free, takes 15 minutes to fill out, and gives you a wealth of information to help you make wise career choices. [www.assessment.com](http://www.assessment.com)

**THE CAREER GATEWAY** is a way to access online tools, resources, and leads that will help you be more successful in finding and securing employment. You'll learn about career opportunities, find training programs, links to placement services, and much more. [www.gatewaytocareers.com](http://www.gatewaytocareers.com)

**WHAT'S NEXT** provides information, inspiration, and resources for those interested in changing careers. This site includes advice on second careers (Career 2.0), financial planning, and a searchable directory of advisors who can assist with your career change or life plans. [www.whatsnext.com](http://www.whatsnext.com)

## Beware of Education Scams

**Carefully research** the training center or college that you are interested in. Be especially cautious about for-profit institutions. Read more about what to look out for on p. 42 of Issue #34 of *The Change Agent*.

**Use a tool like** "Mapping Your Financial Journey" <[www.collegetransition.org](http://www.collegetransition.org)> to help plan for more education and training.



**THE OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK** is one of the most quoted and cited career information guides available. It describes the job duties, working conditions, education and requirements, earnings levels, current employment levels, projected employment change, and employment prospects for hundreds of occupations. [www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/)

**THE ISEEK SKILLS ASSESSMENT** allows you to rate yourself on 35 different skills and see what occupations match those skills. [www.iseek.org/careers/skillsAssessment](http://www.iseek.org/careers/skillsAssessment)

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** is dedicated to ensuring economic self-sufficiency and empowerment for the more than 50 million Americans with disabilities. [www.aapd.com/what-we-do/employment/](http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/employment/)

**THE VETERAN'S JOB SEARCH** begins with an article on how to make the transition from the military to the civilian workforce and then points the reader towards several additional articles and resources for guidance. [www.job-hunt.org/article\\_veterans\\_jobsearch.shtml](http://www.job-hunt.org/article_veterans_jobsearch.shtml)

**WOMEN EMPLOYED** guides you through the steps to finding your best career, gaining the education and skills you need, navigating the application process, and continuing to excel on your career path. [www.womenemployed.org/career-coach](http://www.womenemployed.org/career-coach)

**AMERICA'S CAREER INFORMATION NETWORK** provides information on job search tools, wages, labor market, and occupation and training for job seekers. [www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)

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*Yssa Santos, formerly a student at Excel in Boston, MA, served on the editorial board of this issue. For a more complete list of resources, including those designed for teachers and counselors, visit <[www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras)>.*

# I Help Myself...I Volunteer!

*Mercy Mendoza Cruz*

Having cerebral palsy has never stopped me from doing what I like to do. I am a volunteer at the Lakeview School in New Jersey. This is a school for people with special needs, and I graduated from Lakeview last summer.



**Even though I don't get paid, I am learning so much about life and people.**

I love this job because I get a chance to show that I can be independent. It is wonderful to work with the staff and students; it also allows me to prove to myself that I have a lot to offer the world.

There are times when I feel sad, but when I go to do my volunteer work, I feel happy. Work is good for me!

Even though I don't get paid, I am learning so much about life and people. That is worth more to me than money. Someday, the right paying job may come along. Until then, I will keep trying out all the beautiful and wonderful opportunities my volunteer job has to offer.

*Mercy Mendoza Cruz is 21 years old and is a student at the New Brunswick Public Schools Adult Learning Center in New Jersey. Originally from Honduras, Mercy's goal is to improve her English and Math skills. Her positive attitude sets an example for all to see!*

## Volunteering: What about You?

What are some ways you give time in the community?	What are some volunteer jobs you might explore?	List the ways that volunteering might help you.

**Take it a step further:** Find volunteer jobs near you. Google “volunteer opportunity” and the name of your city or region. Would volunteering help you add skills to the list on p. 35?

# Things I Have Done



Consider all you do outside of the traditional workplace. Include work you have done for your family, your community, and your place of worship. Put a check mark next to all that apply.

## Working With People

- Take care of a sick relative
- Give medicine to a child
- Care for child who is disabled
- Help at a school event
- Make phone calls
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Visit friends and family in nursing homes
- Visit new places
- Take care of my children or other people's children
- Teach or coach a sport
- Organize parties for family or friends
- Teach at my place of worship
- Help children with their homework
- Participate in events in my community
- Volunteer at a library
- Work with other parents in the schools
- Go on field trips for teens and help out
- Play music or dance for others
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Working With Data

- Write checks and balance a checkbook
- Do a budget for my family
- Record money for a club or group
- Handle the finances for a small business
- Read a map
- Follow directions
- Read a flyer or poster
- Apply for a loan or credit

- Fill out forms and applications
- File papers
- Make airline arrangements
- Enter data onto a computer
- Select and price items to be purchased
- Maintain sales records
- Choose colors for sewing, crafts, decorating projects
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Working With Things

- Take care of plants, garden, farm
- Cooking
- Do housecleaning at home
- Flower arranging
- Care for animals
- Type, filing, office work for an organization
- Use a computer
- Take photographs
- Operate stereo equipment
- Build furniture
- Repair equipment, repair appliances
- Operate equipment (lawnmowers, saws, forklifts)
- Use tools
- Drive buses, vans, taxis
- Prepare meals for large groups
- Build things
- Cut down trees
- Give haircuts, or do hair styling
- Take care of cars
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *Integrating Career Awareness*, p. 45, published by the National College Transition Network and SABES <[www.sabes.org](http://www.sabes.org)>, 2009. Download the complete curriculum and find other related resources here: <[www.collegetransition.org](http://www.collegetransition.org)>.

# Advocate for What You Want

*Carolyn Allen*

At my last job, we had a big problem. The place was never clean. The bathroom was nasty and smelled terrible. The guy who was supposed to clean it never did. He just walked around the warehouse as if there was nothing to do. The kitchen was a mess. The refrigerator had things growing inside it.

I got some women together and we went to see the supervisor. We asked him to talk to the janitor about the health of the people in the warehouse. I was a little nervous, that he would not listen to us, but he did.

After our talk with the supervisor, things got a little better. Our bathroom and lunchroom were clean. It felt so good to have a clean refrigerator that I went and bought some food just to put it

inside. The floor was so clean you could eat off it. We had a problem at my workplace, and we advocated for a change. We asked our supervisor for a cleaner warehouse, and we got it.



*Carolyn Allen is a student at Brooklyn Adult Learning Center. At BALC she has gotten her confidence back and is eager to gain knowledge and receive her GED. She has always been a hardworking, loving, dependable mother and wife. Her goal is to become a social worker.*

## Taking Action at Work

Problem:	What Can You Say?	What Can You Do?

**Fill out the chart.** Name some problems you have had at work and some things you could say or do about that problem. Read the articles on pp. 37, 40, and 48-53. Add to the chart based on the ideas you get from these articles.

# Car Wash Workers Organize

*Carlos Linarez and Rocio Valerio*

## We Want Wages and Respect

Car wash workers have had enough abuse and humiliation. We are just like any other person in this world who wants to have honest work and respect. Therefore, we are uniting for a good cause. We are asking for benefits such as a minimum wage, overtime, adequate equipment, set work schedules, vacation time, and health insurance, as well as sick days.

To make ourselves stronger, we work together with several community organizations and a labor union. Our campaign is called WASH NY.

## Many Bad Experiences

I got involved in WASH NY after a friend who had been working for 17 years got fired because he went to get a cup of coffee. This ugly and unjust situation made me angry and sad and inspired me to join the campaign to organize for rights for the car wash workers.

Before our campaign started, we *carwasheros* had many bad experiences. Sometimes the owners did not allow us to keep tips. We had to work with toxic cleaning chemicals, and we did not have the right safety gear. When it was really cold, we weren't allowed to take breaks to warm-up. And the bosses mistreated us. The managers called us bad names. When we spoke up about working conditions, the managers often got back at us by cutting our hours, which hurt our paychecks.

## Starting to Win

After only six months of organizing, we started winning some big victories. In the fall of 2012, car wash workers in Queens voted 21-5 in favor of being represented by RWDSU. Later, car wash workers in the Bronx won another union election. As of January 2013, we have four car washes organized into unions.



*WASH NY is a collaboration between NY Communities for Change, Make the Road New York, and the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU).*

Now, workers have better wages and better working conditions. At the carwash where I work, we were getting paid \$5.50 an hour for 60 hours of work, with no overtime, and we had to share our tips with the managers and cashiers. Then we won a raise to \$6.25 an hour, and we don't have to share the tips with the managers and cashiers.

The owners gave us gloves, but we are still fighting for proper gear. A good thing is that the managers stopped calling us names and insulting us. Also, the boss told the managers that they couldn't fire us without first checking with him.

We feel a bit better now going to work since the managers are not mistreating us like before. Since there has been some change, it has encouraged us to continue fighting for more respect, better pay, and better working conditions.

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*Carlos Linarez is a "carwashero" in the South Bronx. He is from El Salvador and has been in New York for two years. Rocio Valerio, originally from Mexico, is a lead organizer at New York Communities for Change.*

# Raising Children is Work And Our Welfare System Should Recognize That!

Mother Earth James



When I started having children, I did not trust anyone else to take care of them. I went on welfare so that I could stay home with them. I hated the idea of getting a job! "Why?" you may ask. It was not because I was lazy. It was because of what happened to me when I was little.

I was sexually abused as a young child. I had my first child when I was 14. My childhood was stolen from me because the adults in my life were always out working. They weren't at home protecting me. It was as though work was more important than the love and protection of children.

By staying at home all those years with my children, I was able to love them and keep them safe. I was a young mom, but I always stopped whatever I was doing to meet with my children's teachers and make sure school was working out for them.

I taught my children what I knew of life, the good and the bad. I protected them from perpetrators. There is no price tag you can put on that. There is no amount of money that is large enough to compensate a single mom for the work she does to raise and teach her children.

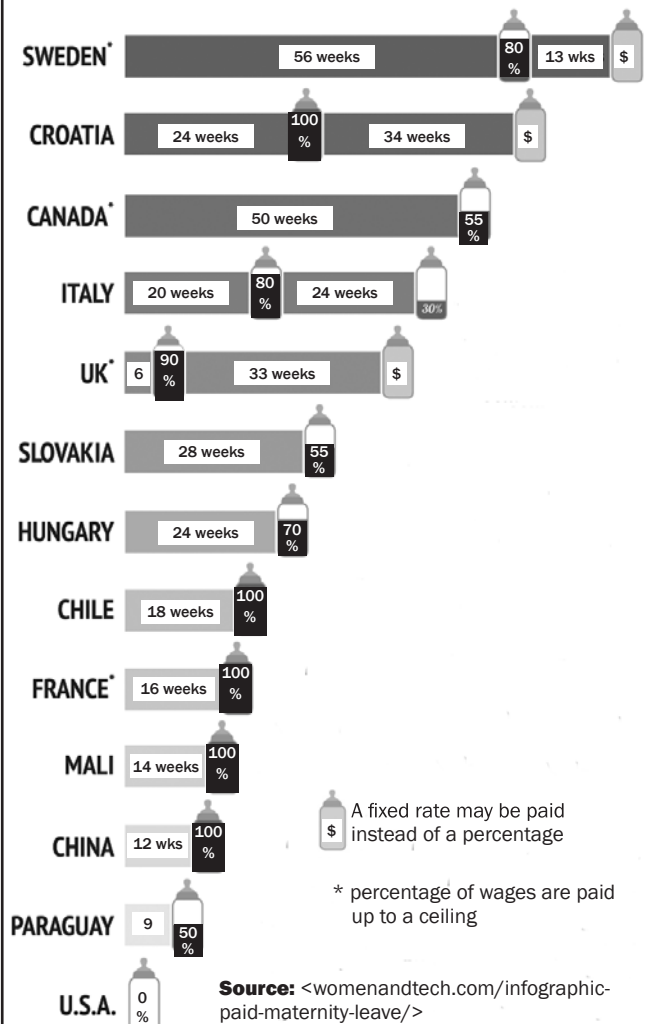
Kids need a parent at home with them. I believe a new welfare system should be created that recognizes that raising children is work. Parents should get support for having a strong relationship with their children. A healthy mind and soul can lead to great things. If we support moms and dads to be with their children and to be good parents, then all of society benefits.

Taywana "Mother Earth" James is working on her education at OCM BOCES in Liverpool NY. She works at ProLiteracy, serves on the editorial board of the Gifford Street Press, and does community organizing. Her essay, "Listen!" was published in "Tales of Resilience," Issue #35 of The Change Agent.

## Paid Maternity Leave

How do nations compare when it comes to government mandated paid leave?

### LENGTH OF LEAVE & % OF WAGES PAID



Summarize this infographic. How do you think it affects women and families to have paid maternity leave?

# Women: Like Men, Only Cheaper

*American Association of University Women*

## 77 Cents

Did you know that in 2011, women working full time in the U.S. typically earned 77 percent of what men earned, a gap of 23 percent? The gap has narrowed since the 1970s due largely to women’s progress in education and workforce participation and to men’s wages rising at a slower rate. But progress has stalled in recent years, and the pay gap does not appear likely to go away on its own.

## Pay Discrimination Hurts Families

Equal pay is not simply a women’s issue—it’s a family issue. Families increasingly rely on women’s wages to make ends meet. In typical married households, women’s incomes accounted for 36 percent of total family income in 2008, up from 29 percent in 1983. A large majority of mothers are in the paid labor force, and about one-third of employed mothers are the sole breadwinners for their families.

## The Pay Gap and Poverty

For the 34 percent of working mothers who are their families’ sole breadwinner—either because they are single parents or their spouses are not in the labor force—the gender pay gap can contribute to poor living conditions, poor nutrition, and fewer opportunities for their children.

For women of color, the gap is even bigger. Latinas earn 58 cents for every dollar that men earn, and African American women earn 68 cents. For most women, closing the gender pay gap is much more than a point of pride—it’s a matter of necessity.

Adapted from: <[www.aauw.org/learn/research/simpleTruth.cfm](http://www.aauw.org/learn/research/simpleTruth.cfm)> with additional information from <[pay-equity.org](http://pay-equity.org)>.



## What Do You Think?

**Should raising children** be treated as work? Why or why not? Read and discuss the article on p. 38.

**Why do you think** we have a gender pay gap? What could we do about it?

**Study the cartoon** on the right. What is the cartoonist saying? Draw (or describe) your own cartoon, showing how the story could be different.

**Find out more.** April 9, 2013 is Equal Pay Day. Why April 9? Because that’s how long women will have to work into 2013 to make what men earned in 2012 <[pay-equity.org](http://pay-equity.org)>.



Source: Pierre Kroll. Used with permission.

# Putting a Stop to Discrimination

Roberto Ramirez

## Terrible Conditions, Insults

I started working at Golden Farm Grocery in 2005. The job was very hard. There were days that we worked from 4am to 7pm. We didn't have a lunch or food break. Then they hired a new manager and things got even worse. He demanded that we work faster and we couldn't answer back at all. If we did, we would be automatically fired. He hit some of my co-workers and insulted them.

## Wage Theft

We spoke to our boss and told him what was happening, but he ignored us. Then we went to look for help outside of the store. We went to the Department of Labor, and they did an investigation of our situation. They found out that we were getting paid \$360 dollars a week for 72 hours of work. They also discovered that in his accounting books, the owner wrote that we had been paid \$637 dollars per week. He forced us to sign for it, even though we were getting paid much less.

## Looking for Help

The Department of Labor investigated our employer, but we still saw no change in our situation. We decided to look for help from other groups. We met Lucas Sanchez and Kate Baruc who work with New York Communities for Change (NYCC). We decided to file a lawsuit for back wages and at the same time request an election to join a union.

After my boss found out about all this, he got us all together and asked us to drop the lawsuit. He tried to bribe us by offering to pay us minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour) plus \$10.85 for overtime. When bribery didn't work, he threatened us. Every day, he threatened to call immigration. He told us, "Keep the door open because one of these days immigration will come and you'll need a quick escape."



Above, Roberto joins with other workers calling for a just wage for everyone.

Due to this, my co-workers were scared and wanted to forget about the lawsuit and the union. But there were six of us who weren't scared. We kept organizing more people in the store. Finally, we won the election and the lawsuit for back wages. However, our boss refuses to give us a work contract. That's why we have called for a boycott of the store. Our struggle continues. This is the sad reality of the Golden Farm workers. That's why I've joined my friends and co-workers to learn English so that we will be able to stop the abuses by bosses like Sonny Kim.

Besides being a supermarket worker, Roberto Ramirez is a dedicated community organizer, a student, and a loving father. He has spent over two years fighting for better conditions at the store where he works in Brooklyn, NY. Roberto participates in classes through the NYCC ESL Program.

### **If you are an undocumented worker, you still have rights!**

**1. The right to be paid:** You have the right to be paid minimum wage and overtime. If you do not receive all of your pay for time you worked, you can recover that pay.





Cartoon by Ethan Heitner. Used with permission. [www.freedomfunnies.com](http://www.freedomfunnies.com)

**2. The right to organize:** It is illegal for an employer to punish or threaten you for organizing to improve your work conditions.

**3. The right to be free from discrimination:** It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against you based on race, religion, age, or sex.

**4. The right to be safe on the job:** Workplace health and safety protections apply to you.

**5. The right to remain silent:** After you are hired, you do not have to answer if your employer asks about your immigration status.

# Legislating Wages

What's fair? What's sustainable? Is there such a thing as too much?

Cynthia Peters

**BEFORE YOU READ:**

- Share what you know about the minimum wage.
- Why do you think the government sets a minimum wage? Do you agree that it should?
- Have you ever worked a minimum wage job? What was it like?
- What do you think a living wage is?
- Should there be a maximum wage? Why or why not?

## Minimum Wage

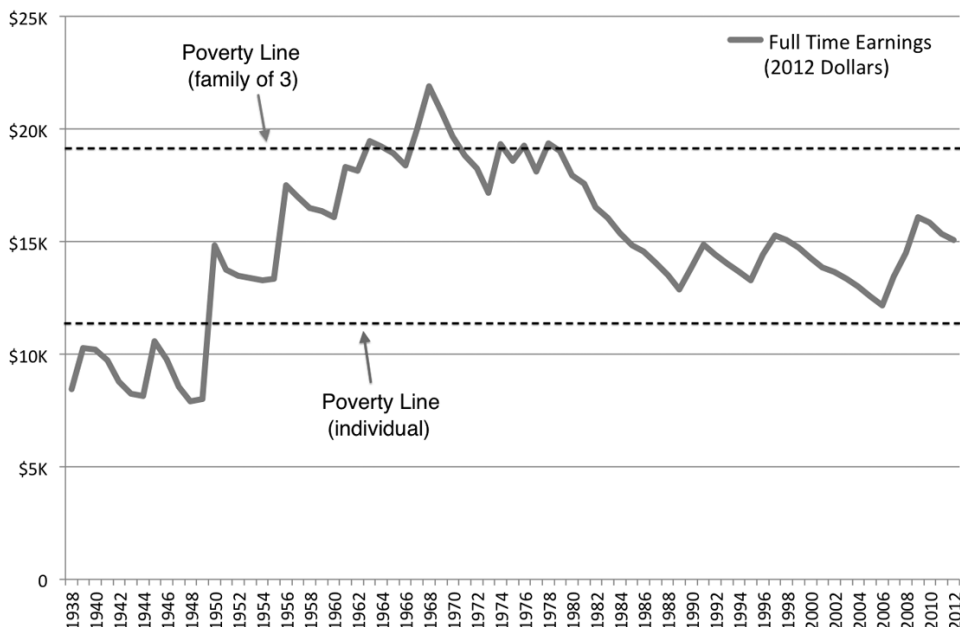
Currently, the federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. Some states and cities have set a *higher* minimum wage, such as Massachusetts (\$8.00), Oregon (\$8.95), and San Francisco (\$10.24). In the 1930s, people in the United States fought for economic

rights [see article on pp. 44-45]. One of the rights they won was the guarantee that wages could not go below a certain amount. Some people believe minimum wage laws have reduced poverty. They say that increased wages are good for the economy because workers can spend more. Others believe that forcing employers to pay a minimum wage causes them to hire fewer people. They believe minimum wage laws increase unemployment and are therefore bad for the economy.

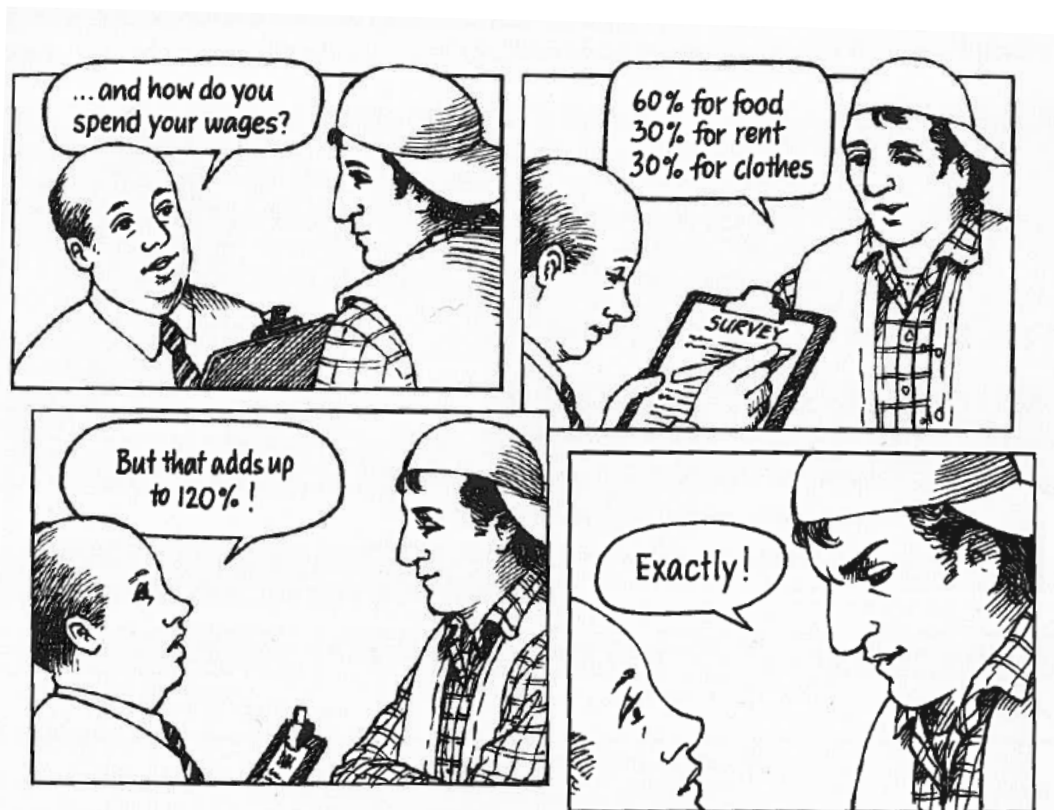
## Living Wage

One thing is certain, however, it is almost impossible to support a family on a minimum wage job. This reality has led some activists to fight for something called a living wage. This is not a new concept. In 1831, Pope Leo XIII argued that wages

ought to be sufficient to support a worker and his family and a decent way of life. In 1948, the United Nations went further, saying that a living wage is a human right: "Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and for his family an existence worthy of human dignity." In the United States, over 100 cities and universities have laws that guarantee workers a living wage, which is usually \$3-4 higher than the minimum wage.



Write three true statements you can make based on the information in this chart. Source: <[www.financialramblings.com/archives/history-of-federal-minimum-wage-rate](http://www.financialramblings.com/archives/history-of-federal-minimum-wage-rate)>



How do you spend your wages? What would a living wage be for you? Make a chart of all your expenses. What income would you need not just to survive but to live? Source: Problem Posing at Work, Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein, used with permission from Grass Roots Press.

## Maximum Wage

There are various ways that people have implemented a maximum wage. In Venezuela, government employees are not allowed to earn salaries that are more than 12 times higher than the minimum wage. At Mondragon, a cooperative in Spain that does millions of dollars of business each year and employs more than 80,000 people in 250 companies, imposes a 6 to 1 ratio on the highest and lowest paid employees. In the United States, during World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed that corporate salaries should be limited to no more than \$25,000 per year after taxes. His plan was to tax earnings higher than \$25,000 in take-home pay at a rate of 100%. In the end, the government did not agree to a 100% tax rate, but it did agree to a 93% tax rate on take-home pay over \$25,000.

Recently, Larry Hanley, a labor union president, proposed a way that federal law could limit corporate compensation. He proposed that no employer should receive more than 100 times the wages earned by his or her lowest paid employee. For example, if the lowest paid workers made \$25,000 per year, the employer would make no more than \$2.5 million per year. Using this model, “the employer’s compensation could not increase above that amount unless his or her lowest paid workers got an equivalent raise as well.”

Clearly, there is a lot of public debate — today and throughout history — about wages. What is your opinion about how we should legislate wages?

**Sources:** <[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)>, <[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)>, <[model-economy.wikispaces.com/Mondragon+Cooperatives](http://model-economy.wikispaces.com/Mondragon+Cooperatives)>, <[www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)>.

# Fighting for Economic Protections

## Protests Led to New Laws and a Social Safety Net

Howard Zinn

In the 1930s, the Great Depression left one third of the working population unemployed. Working class people and poor people began to join together to demand economic rights.

One of the first major actions was in 1932 when veterans of World War I came to Washington, DC. These veterans had children who were going hungry. They had been promised bonuses as a result of their service in World War I. They never

received their bonuses. So 20,000 of them came from all over the country and they set up a camp near Congress to demand their bonus. Ironically, the government called on the police and army to destroy their tent colony.

But this was just the first of many rebellions that would take place through the rest of the decade.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to office in 1933, he faced large and powerful working

**Roosevelt faced pressure from massive numbers of unemployed people organized together in councils.**



World War I veterans came to DC to demand the post-war bonus they had been promised.

### 120 UNIONS VOTE ON CALL OF 45,000 TO GENERAL STRIKE

National Guardsmen Patrol Battle Zone on Waterfront



Headlines report the 1934 general strike in San Francisco.

class and poor people's movements. A lot of people think, "Roosevelt was a kindhearted man, and he wanted to help people, so he helped pass a lot of economic reforms." It is true that Roosevelt was more sensitive than most presidents have been to the plight of the poor. Furthermore, he had Eleanor Roosevelt at his side, and she was even more sensitive than he was, and she was a good influence on him.

But Roosevelt faced turmoil all over the country, and *that* is what pushed him to take action. He faced pressure from massive numbers of unemployed people organized together in councils; he faced tenants' councils organizing rent strikes. He faced a general strike in Minneapolis and a general strike in San Francisco. He faced 400,000 textile workers in the South going on strike in 1934.

The country was in danger of having the whole system torn apart, and Roosevelt under-



Students at the University of Virginia staged a hunger strike and numerous protests in support of workers' right to a living wage.

stood that. The result was the “New Deal” reforms of the 1930s: Social Security, unemployment insurance, a minimum wage, and subsidized housing — a “social safety net,” which did not eliminate poverty by any means, but it did offer some basic protections to many people. Also, for the first time, workers won new labor laws, such as the National Labor Relations Act, which gave some rights to labor unions.

People have continued to fight for economic rights. While the labor movement is not as powerful or as well organized as it was in the 1930s and 1940s, working people still fight for better jobs. One of the current demands — for a living wage — has brought together students, factory workers, janitors, and bus drivers. So the fight for economic justice is a long struggle, which still continues.

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Howard Zinn (1922-2010) was the author of *A People's History of the United States*. This piece was excerpted from “History of Workers' Movements in the U.S.,” <[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)> and adapted by Cynthia Peters. Find more teaching materials on this topic at <[zinnedproject.org](http://zinnedproject.org)>.

## Thinking Further about Economic Rights

**What economic demands** does Howard Zinn mention or allude to in the article?

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**According to Zinn**, what pushed President Roosevelt to create the “New Deal” reforms of the 1930s?

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**Write down some current debates** about economic policy happening in the U.S.

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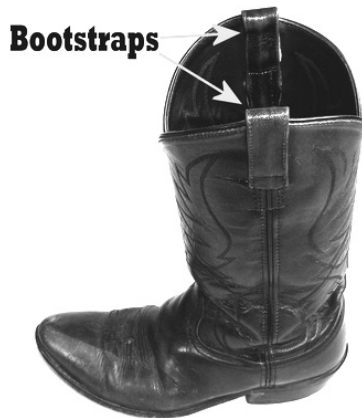


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# Nobody Makes it on their Own

Andy Nash

Ever since the recession, there's been a lot of talk about "job creators" – individuals whose successful businesses will provide jobs for the rest of us. Their success is usually portrayed as the result of their own hard work, exceptional intelligence, creativity and personal sacrifice. From this perspective, the government only gets in the way of business' success by taxing their profits and regulating their business practices.



The famous American idiom says we should all be able to "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps."

## The Self-Made Myth

The idea that successful people have made it all on their own is challenged in a new book called, *The Self-Made Myth: And the Truth about How Government Helps Individuals and Businesses Succeed*. The authors interviewed dozens of wealthy business owners about how they became successful, and learned that they couldn't have done it without government and taxpayer supports such as:

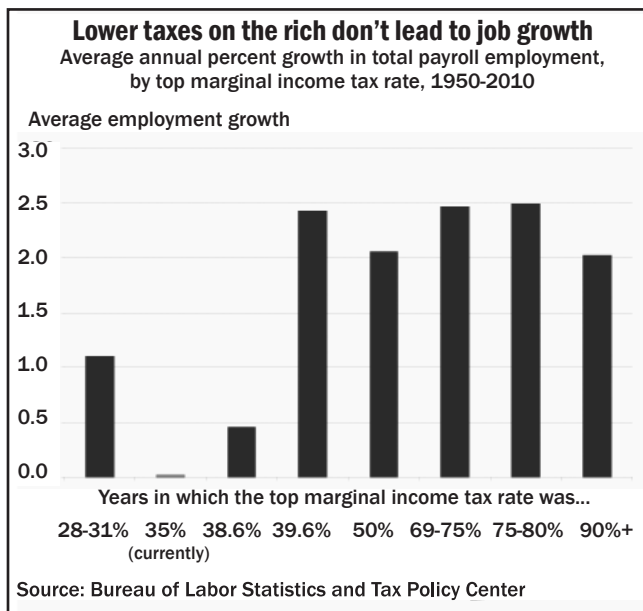
- transportation systems to move their products to customers
- public schools and libraries to educate their workers
- government-funded research (which created the internet and other discoveries)
- the courts to keep the system fair
- regulations (such as food inspection)
- government services (from snow removal to bank deposit insurance)

When we consider all the ways that the government and taxpayers contribute to the creation of successful businesses, we see that we all share the credit for creating jobs. Together, we have laid the groundwork for companies to grow and prosper.

## Businesses and Taxes

Yet, after drawing upon the public to build their fortunes, many at the top claim that they made it on their own and are not obliged to pay their full share of taxes. And their efforts to avoid taxes have paid off for them. In 1950, corporate taxes as a portion of all federal revenue were 30%. In 2009 they were 6.6%. (UFE infographic) For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 22 cents.

So do lower taxes for businesses lead them to create more jobs? It doesn't seem so. In the past 60 years, many more jobs were created when the top tax rate was high, not when it was low (see chart below). During times of low tax rates, businesses have not used their tax savings to create jobs. They have banked the money, sometimes moving it offshore where it can't be taxed.



## The Common Good

The government uses our tax money to create jobs directly (hiring teachers, police, etc.) and indirectly (by providing services and infrastructure that businesses need in order to succeed). We all contribute to building the economy. Despite some business's claims to have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, nobody makes it on their own.

And nobody deserves to take the benefits without giving back to the common good.

*Andy Nash is the director of the New England Literacy Resource Center.*

**Sources:** *The Self-Made Myth*, Brian Miller and Mike Lapham; <[www.alternet.org/economy/ten-numbers-rich-would-fudged](http://www.alternet.org/economy/ten-numbers-rich-would-fudged)>; <[www.americanprogress.org/issues/tax-reform/news/2011/06/27/9856/rich-peoples-taxes-have-little-to-do-with-job-creation/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/tax-reform/news/2011/06/27/9856/rich-peoples-taxes-have-little-to-do-with-job-creation/)>.

**How do we CODDLE the super-wealthy?**

The rules that help shape our economy have been influenced by the super-wealthy over the past 30 years, and tilted in their favor. Here's how:

### 1. Huge Tax Breaks

Tax rates for our nation's wealthiest have plummeted since the 1940s. Despite historically low tax rates in the late 1990s, President Bush created more tax giveaways that flowed directly into the pockets of the wealthiest Americans.

**\$1.8 trillion** revenue lost as a result of the Bush tax cuts.

**40%** of this went into the bank accounts of Americans making over \$500,000 annually.

### 2. Preferential Tax Treatment

It pays to make money from money. A paycheck—that is, income from work—is taxed at a higher rate than income from interest on capital gains and investments, which is the main source of income for most millionaires and billionaires.

**2010 Effective Tax Rates as a % of income**

Warren Buffett	17.4%
His Secretary	36%

Our leaders have asked for 'shared sacrifice.' But when they did the asking, they spared me."  
—Warren Buffett (NY Times op-ed)

### 3. Tax Dodging and Loopholes

Wealthy corporations have become very skilled at avoiding taxes. Shifting operations overseas, creating sham headquarters in tax haven countries, and even renouncing U.S. status are all common ways of "gaming" the system.

**EXON Mobil**: \$15 billion income taxes paid in 2010; \$0 paid to the U.S.

**GE**: \$5.1 billion U.S. profits in 2010; \$0 paid in taxes.

**CORPORATE TAXES AS A PORTION OF ALL FEDERAL REVENUE**

1950	30%
2009	6.6%

Infographic created by Shannon M. for United for a Fair Economy. Excerpted and adapted slightly by Cynthia Peters. See full infographic at <[faireconomy.org/coddle](http://faireconomy.org/coddle)>. Look at the chart on p. 29 for more on wealth inequality over the years.

## Fact vs. Opinion

Use the left column to list facts and the right column to list opinions from the article and graphics.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

# Organizing for Our Fair Share

## A worker talks about the struggle to bring a union to a hotel in Boston

Nestor Garcia

### Work Hard and Organize

In my life, I've been a janitor, an airport worker, a welder, and a hotel worker. Now I am a union organizer. I fight for working-class people to have a good job with decent pay and dignity.

I believe everyone should be empowered to have their fair share. Everyone should be able to support their family and realize their dreams. If you are willing to work hard, you should be able

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**We say to the real estate developers, "This is not just a place to make money. This is a community."**

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to make it here in the U.S. But working hard doesn't mean keeping your mouth shut and doing your job. Part of the hard work is fighting for what is right.

Sometimes you might feel disappointed, but don't give up. When the economy goes bad, businesses lay people off. They get more aggressive with discipline. A union gets the workers together to educate them. We join together and say to the owners, "No, you're not going to take our jobs away. You are not going to lower our wages."

We also reach out to the politicians, churches, and the general public – to let them know about our

### Collective Bargaining

**If you are not in a union, you negotiate one-on-one with your boss for your pay and benefits. If you are in a union, you unite with other workers and negotiate collectively.**



Nestor Garcia (front) on a UNITE HERE picket line.

struggle. How workers are treated is not just a workplace issue; it is also a community issue.

The real estate developers come to our city to make money in the big hotels. They are just thinking about how much profit they can make on each room. We say to them, "This is not just a place to



make money. This is a community. We live here and shop here, and our children go to school here. The wages you pay us circulate through the whole community and make this a better place." United, we can make sure they see us as a community, not just a way for them to get rich.

### Bringing the Union to the "W" Hotel

Before I started working in hotels, I was a welder. I helped build the "W" Hotel. But the economy crashed and there were no welding jobs. I trained to become a prep cook and got a job working for \$15 per hour at the "W" Hotel. As a welder, I had been making \$36 per hour.

When I started working at the "W," it was not a union hotel. Working conditions were not good.

They didn't pay overtime. They fired people for no reason. The cocktail waitresses had to wear very short skirts and high heels. They worked 10-hour shifts. They had to put up with a lot of disrespect and harassment.

The housekeepers had to clean 18-20 rooms per day. It is very strenuous work.

We had no set schedule, so we could never make plans because

we never knew when we were working from one week to the next. I was paying \$116 per week for

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**They didn't pay overtime. They fired people for no reason. The cocktail waitresses had to wear very short skirts and high heels.**

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*continued on next page*

## Training, Better Pay, and Benefits at Local 26

The most important thing about my job is the feeling that I belong to an organization that cares about my family and me, and puts me at the top of their agenda. Before getting a union job, I had worked as a supervisor in a hotel, and the benefits were almost nonexistent. The medical insurance was expensive, and I had a co-payment every time I visited the doctor.

At that time, my wife who was a union member (Local 26) told me about the opportunity to attend the Basic Culinary Skills class at the BEST Corp. Hotel Training Center. The class was taught by a skilled instructor, and BEST Corp. provided us with a professional mentor who assisted us in making our resumes and applying for jobs.

After this class, I decided to transfer to a union position and I immediately started to benefit from the opportunities the union offers its members. Being a union member opened many doors for me.

Most importantly, Local 26 provided us with excellent medical insurance. With

help from the union's homebuyers assistance program, and legal advice provided through the union benefits, my wife and I were able to buy a home in the fall of 2012.

The Hotel Training Center offers many free classes to union members and their families, such as technology classes, On-Call Banquet Server classes, Food Safety training, Room Attendant training, and the GED. The computer lab gives us the opportunity to study and do research. Being a union member gives us the security that we are backed by qualified professionals who will help us fulfill our dreams and push us to be the best that we can be.



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*Khalid Jaouahir is the Food and Beverage Supervisor at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Boston, and he is a member of Local 26.*

my family’s health and dental insurance. Even with health insurance, when my wife had a baby, we had to pay a \$2700 deductible.

Five of us started talking. We held meetings with other workers. We met off the premises – secretly – at the McDonald’s or the food court across the street. We didn’t want management to know because we knew they wouldn’t like it and they’d find a way to punish the leaders. We brought housekeepers and cocktail waitresses together – people who had never had any reason to talk to

each other before. But now we found out what we had in common – low wages and no respect. And we found we could connect around the idea of making the “W” a better place.

**Many Challenges... then Victory**

The hardest thing about organizing a union was trying to get people to understand that they have to stand up and fight for their rights. We brought in documents and charts that showed how much money the hotel was making off of us. We showed people that we were only asking for what was fair.

We spent three months having

meetings at all times of the night in order to reach all the shifts. We had 15 committees and many new leaders in all the departments. I remember the day we had our union vote. It was May 11, 2010. We won by a huge majority.

It took about a year, and then we started seeing the benefits of being in a union. Family insurance decreased to \$12

**What is a Strike?**

**When workers are organized, they are in a better position to negotiate for what they want in the workplace. One way to get an employer’s attention is to go out on strike or to threaten to go out on strike. A strike is when a majority of workers vote to stop working.**



**Got a Grievance?**

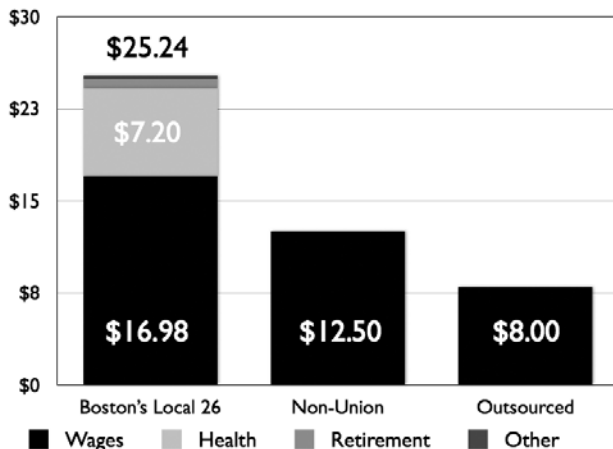
**Grievance:** a reason for complaining or being unhappy with a situation.

**Workers** in a union have the right to make a complaint when management does something wrong against them.

**The worker** and his or her union steward go through a series of steps to address the problem, finally ending in arbitration, which includes a neutral third party.

**The rules** for your grievance procedure are negotiated in the workers’ contract with the employer, and the employer is legally bound to uphold the terms of the contract.

**Comparing Hourly Wages: Union, Non-Union, and Outsourced**



**Source:** UNITE HERE, Local 26. Note: Outsourced workers do not work directly for the hotel, but for another company. The hotel subcontracts that company to provide a service.

**Paying Dues**

**Who pays for unions?**

The member do! Every union member is required to pay dues, which are usually subtracted from the member's pay check and given directly to the union. The union uses these dues to pay staff, support political campaigns, and provide supports to members.

Boston's Local 26 members pay dues of about \$735 per year.



per week. The hotel put \$7.20 per hour into a trust fund to pay for our pensions, education, and other benefits. The hourly pay for a prep cook went up to \$18.45. We had job security, seniority, clear work schedules, and other protections. And the cocktail waitresses no longer have to wear high heeled shoes, and they got new uniforms—much more dignified!

Most importantly, we had a grievance procedure. If you feel like you aren't being treated right, you are not alone. As a union, we back each other up.

About three months after we got the union, people started feeling more comfortable. They got more outspoken. They had a clear understanding of their rights and a way to fight for them.

I felt pretty good. I had done something for my fellow human beings. My wife worried that I would get fired. But all those co-workers, they trusted me. I became a shop steward. And now I am an organizer with the union, and I am trying to help other hotel workers get organized to bring in a union so they can fight for their rights.

*Nestor Garcia is from the Dominican Republic. He's been in the U.S. for 21 years. He is currently an organizer with UNITE/HERE Local 26 in Boston.*



**Making Sense of What You've Read**

**Have you ever** been in the position of bargaining one-on-one or collectively? Describe those experiences—whether they happened at work, in the family, or in the community.

**Have you ever been in a union?** What was it like?

**The author says** that when the economy goes bad, workers still have power. What power does he say they have? Do you agree or disagree?

**Study the chart** on the left. Write some true statements based on the information in the chart. Why do you think outsourced workers get paid so much less?

**According to the information** in the chart on p. 50 and the box on union dues above, what is the net benefit annually of being a union hotel worker in Boston as compared to non-union hotel worker?

**At the "W" Hotel**, who decides what working conditions are like?

# You Are Not Alone!

## Better Working Conditions through Community Organization

*An interview with Jorge Anguiano  
by Kelly Malone*

*Working conditions are dangerous for Latino immigrant laborers. To find jobs, they often stand in front of hardware stores waiting for contractors to pick them up for a day of work. They don't know what job they will be asked to do, what the pay will be, or what the conditions will be. If they try to negotiate their pay or point out dangerous conditions, they'll probably lose the job.*

*For 18 years, Casa Latina, a member of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, has been on a mission to change these conditions. Casa Latina organizes day laborers so that they can earn a living wage in safe working conditions and with a voice at work.*

*Jorge Anguiano used to get work by standing in front of Lowes or Home Depot. Now he gets his jobs through Casa Latina's Workers' Center. In this interview, he discusses how his work life has changed as a result.*

### **What is it like trying to get work by standing in front of Lowes or Home Depot?**

It is difficult. You can't be sure what the pay rate will be. And you don't know what type of job you will be doing. There is no time to ask or negotiate, because you just have to jump in the truck or you don't get the work.

### **It sounds like there are a lot of unknowns.**

Yes, that is true. One time, I was working in Phoenix, Arizona. We were standing on the street, and a man asked us if we wanted a seasonal job in Washington state cutting branches for Christmas decorations. He said he would charge \$300 for transportation and would take that out of our pay.



He said he did not want any workers who spoke English. Why? Because he knew that once we were in Washington, we would have to stay. Usually, that type of job pays \$1,200 dollars per week. I knew we were not going to make that much, and that was okay. But the first week, he took out the \$300 from my pay and gave me only \$50.00.

### **Can you talk about some of the differences between finding jobs on the street and being hired through the Workers' Center.**

One difference is higher pay. At Casa Latina, we earn \$15 per hour for gardening. Instead of rushing a truck, we hold a raffle for choosing who goes out on a job. We also have a Workers' Assembly where we make rules for how we will work. Before we go out on the job, the dispatcher tells the employer our rules about safety, equipment, and wages. In the old days, we had no negotiating power. But now we do, thanks to the Workers' Center.

### **Do the employers treat you any differently because you're part of the Workers' Center?**

Yes! When we are hired through Casa Latina, the employers trust us more than someone who picks us up at the Home Depot. The customer knows the reputation of Casa Latina. Also, when we get jobs through the Workers' Center, there is a better chance that the job will go well. The employers treat us better, so we feel proud and want to do a really good job for ourselves and for Casa Latina.

### **How does Casa Latina help ensure the workers' safety on the job?**

To be eligible for the raffle, you have to take a four-hour safety training that Casa Latina developed and is approved by OSHA. So every worker knows the rules, and the dispatcher discusses these with the customer before you go on the job.

**Do any employers ignore those rules?**

Oh, yes. They do sometimes. On one job, we had to move gravel up and down about three flights of stairs. It was very slippery. We tried to explain to the employer that the conditions were very dangerous, and the employer didn't like that. In this case, we finished our work that day, but we refused to go back the next day.

**What do you do when you arrive at a site and the employer asks you to do dangerous work?**

We call the dispatcher, and the dispatcher explains to the employer that the conditions are unsafe. If the employer doesn't want to make the working conditions safer, the dispatcher will send someone to pick us up if the van is available, or we take the bus, or if one of us drove, we give the others a ride. We lose pay for the day, but we show the employer that we are serious and we are united. We all leave together. The employer will have no one to do the work.

**So let's talk some more about the increase in wages. How does that affect your work?**

We take pride in getting paid more per hour, and we know we have to do a really good job. We offer trainings so that workers will get more skills. For example, if you are doing a gardening job, you have to know so many types of plants. You don't want to pull up an expensive plant because you think it's a weed.

**Say someone is new, and he doesn't know the plants and maybe digs up the wrong ones.**

That happened one time, and the customer called to complain. The dispatcher gave us the complaint, and we took it to the Workers' Assembly. We decided that if the person who made the mistake wanted to keep gardening, he would need to

take the workshop. And, while he was learning, he could go out with someone who is more experienced. We can help each other this way.

**What else does the Workers' Center do?**

We offer English classes to those who want to improve their English. I think it should be mandatory for workers to take the ESL classes. The women

who do domestic work have to take 20 hours per month of English classes. I think we should, too.

**Why is learning English important?**

It is important for all of us to be able to reach out to the community. We're not always going to be welcome in the community because they don't understand us. But we're here in the community whether people like it or not. And we need to have a stronger voice. We need to learn how other people think and how things work, and we'll feel more comfortable because we'll have a sense of pride and feel a part of things. It takes a long time. We as workers need to work harder to get involved out there.

*Kelly Malone is a writer and editor in Seattle. She writes grants for Casa Latina. Jorge Anguiano is a member of Casa Latina <casa-latina.org>.*

**Find a Workers' Center**

**Restaurant Opportunity Center <rocunited.org>** helps restaurant workers win fair wages and benefits, and it offers education and training.

**Interfaith Worker Justice <iwj.org>** has a list of workers centers all over the country.

**Or...search for "workers center" + your city or region and find a workers' center near you.**



# Visions for the Future



**Jose:** I'm sick of this place. They own you here. Nothing ever changes.

**Mario:** Well, it's better than it was 10 years ago. I've seen a lot of changes since I started here.

**Jose:** Like what?

**Mario:** We have longer breaks, better pay, and medical insurance. It took a while, but we won them.

**Jose:** Yes, but I came to this country to get ahead. I didn't come here to fight for every penny. I'll never make it at this rate. I'm looking for another job.

**Mario:** Well, wake up. It's the same everywhere. The only way things get better is if we stick together. Things can change. And now a lot of people are supporting us.

**Source:** *Problem Posing at Work*, Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein, used with permission from Grass Roots Press.

## Thinking about Change

**Describe how** Jose and Mario each feel. Share a story of when you felt the same way.

**Drawing from the articles** you read in this issue of *The Change Agent*, list some of the actions people can take to bring change to the workplace. Which of these could you try in your workplace?

**Revisit the activity** on p. 3. Now that you've read some of the stories in "Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs," describe your ideal job. Is your description different from the one you did before you read the magazine?

**What is your vision** for what work could like? And who should decide?

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## Women's Perspectives Number 8

A Journal of Writings and Artwork  
by Adult Learners



This journal makes great reading for ALL students in literacy and basic education programs.

This year's topic is "All Women Can Succeed."

Check out our website for details on future calls for writing.



Women Expanding Literacy  
Education Action Resource Network  
[www.welearnwomen.org](http://www.welearnwomen.org)



**NEW!**  
***The Change Agent***  
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Selected articles on a variety of themes are now available for students to listen to online. Research shows that adult reading students need to hear text read aloud in order to improve their own reading. *The Change Agent's* audios are leveled so students can easily find accessible articles.

**Go to at [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent)**

# Change Agent CALL FOR ARTICLES

## THEME:

Technology is a big part of daily life, and it can provide important educational tools. With this issue of *The Change Agent*, we invite you to share your story about technology! Use one or two of the following prompts to guide your writing. (By technology, we mean computers, mobile phones, etc.):

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Write about a way that technology has benefited your education. Be specific.
- Discuss ways that technology has been a disadvantage in your education. Be specific.
- Describe the debates you might have in your family—with your children or parents, for example—about how to use technology.
- How have ideas about privacy changed with technology? Should there be guidelines or laws that protect people's privacy?
- How do you relate to the changes in technology? Do you look forward to all the new products on the market? Or do you resist the constant changes?
- Have you ever used technology to promote democracy or grassroots participation? If so, how?
- What is the role of advertising in free online content?
- Are there ethical guidelines that you believe should be enforced around how technology can be used to track your habits, etc.?
- What do you think of the way social media “connects” people? Describe positive and/or negative experiences with it.
- Describe your favorite app for furthering your education.

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS:** May 3, 2013. Make sure to include contact information. Send your submissions to: [cpeters@worlded.org](mailto:cpeters@worlded.org). Please submit illustrations, cartoons, and graphics on this theme too! The complete “call for articles” is at [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent).



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