

Why Be in the Union?

Rosmery Pérez

Although some immigrants are professionals in their country, they cannot always work in these professions here. As a home health aide worker, I have steady work. My patients are from different races and other cultures, but with humility and patience, we can resolve our difficulties. And because I am in a union, I have more protections in my job.

The union teaches us about our rights as workers. The union brings workers together to fight for higher salaries and for more benefits—such as health insurance and paid holidays and

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sick days. We have representation by immigration attorneys, and legal assistance in many other areas.

If we are disciplined by our boss, we have a right to demand to be represented by a union delegate. This is called Weingarten rights.

The union offers citizenship courses and ESL and computer courses so we can improve

ourselves and develop in other areas as citizens or residents of this country. Many employees wonder why they have to pay dues to the union. Our dues make it possible for the union to operate.

I feel grateful that I could bring my son here with me where I lead a more peaceful life. Thank God and this country for giving me the opportunity and allowing me to be here. A thousand times thanks.



Rosmery Pérez is a student in the ESL Program at the 1199SEIU Bill Michelson Home Care Education Fund in New York City. She is from The Dominican Republic and has been working as a Home Health Aide for four years. She enjoys working with the elderly and would like to become a nurse. She has two children.

Find Out More

See Issue #36 of *The Change Agent*, “Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs” to learn more about what a union is, and how workers (many of them immigrants) have benefited from being in a union.

- Nestor Garcia tells how joining the union UNITE/HERE helped improve wages and conditions for hotel workers at the “W” hotel in Boston (p. 48).
- Khalid Jaouahir describes the extra training he got as a union member and how that opened doors for him.
- Carlos Linarez and Rocio Valerio describe the problems that car wash workers in New York City faced...until they organized and voted to join a union—the RWDSU (p. 37).

