

# What about Excluded Workers?\*

## Unions and Grassroots Organizations Make a Difference

Darby Corniel

### BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Think about the word excluded. (It means the opposite of included.) Read the sentence in *bold italics* below to learn more about how it is being used in the context of this article.
2. Read about unions in the *bold italics* sentences on the next page. What do you think about unions?

### Some People Suffer More than Others

In this country, some people have a lot. Other people do not have very much. During the pandemic, we saw some people suffer more than others.



Immigrant workers and advocates rally in favor of including funding in the state budget for excluded workers. Photo from [fundexcludedworkers.org](http://fundexcludedworkers.org)

For example, some workers could not receive benefits. We call them “excluded workers.” *Excluded workers are undocumented immigrants.* They cannot receive



After 23 days, the hunger strikers broke their fast and a \$2.1 billion Excluded Workers Fund was passed in New York in April 2021. Photo from [fundexcludedworkers.org](http://fundexcludedworkers.org).

\* This an intermediate-level version of the story published on pp. 6-10.

unemployment benefits. Many of them are fathers and mothers. They have worked in this country most of their lives.

The pandemic was very hard for excluded workers. Many lost their jobs. They did not have money for food or rent.

### We Fight for Workers' Rights

I work for the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE). We work with unions and community organizations. We give training and employment services to workers in New York City. Here is the story of what we did to ease the crisis for our workers.

- We helped students learn Zoom, so they could continue their ESOL classes.
- We helped families find the bodies of their loved ones who died of Covid-19 in the hospital.
- We gave food to people who did not have enough.
- We fought for laws that would make workers more safe on the job.
- We fought for a law that gives unemployment benefits to excluded workers.



*Darly Corniel teaching a class at the Consortium for Worker Education.*



*A member of the American Federation of Government Employees holds a sign.*

***Unions help workers get more power. Unions help workers get higher wages, benefits, and dignity on the job.*** There is a lot of inequity in this country. But unions fight for people to get their fair share.

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*Darly Corniel is the education director of the Consortium for Worker Education in New York City. She immigrated to New York from Venezuela in 1997. She lives in New York City and is the proud mom of a ten-year-old son. Darly believes that all workers deserve a fair chance to live and work with dignity.*

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#### **AFTER YOU READ:**

- 1.** According to the author, who suffered more during the pandemic?
- 2.** What are some of the things unions did to try to support their members during the pandemic? Cite specific examples from the text.
- 3.** How does the author feel about unions? How do you know?
- 4.** Share your own experience with unions.