

## California Future of Work Commission Listening Session: Immigrant Workers/ Day Laborers

**Date / Location:** 27 February 20 / IDEPSCA Los Angeles, CA / 2:30 – 3:30pm

**Organized by:** California Immigrant Policy Center, Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), Pomona Economic Opportunity Center (PEOC)

**FWC Commissioners Attending:** N/A

**G.O. staff attending:** Julie Su, Yungsohn Park, Michael Younger, Abby Snay, Tamara McDonald

### **Discussion Summary:**

- Julie Su gave a brief overview of the work of the Commission and its work envisioning a new future of work in California. This session will let the Commission know about current working conditions for day laborers and what the future of work means to them.
- Workers talked about 3 concerns:
  - **Wage theft:** workers gave examples of: working with no time clock and not getting paid for the first day of work; being promised payment after 1 day of work but not getting paid unless they came back a 2<sup>nd</sup> day, and having the police tell them they couldn't help with any problems on private property.
  - **Training:** workers talked about getting charged more for training if they were not documented, of the need for free training, and of completing training and getting certificates but not able to find jobs because of lack of documentation.
  - **Workers' Comp:** Workers described going to a job unloading boxes; with the shipping container not set up right, a box fell and a worker hurt his back. It's taking a long time to get payment for getting hurt on the job.
- **How do you see your work changing in the future?**
  - Minimum wage is always nothing; the cost of living keeps going up; we'll never catch it. This is the job center but also the abuse center: you hear horror stories here. People still offer us \$10 an hour. We'll never catch up, never.
  - In the near future, we will see more and more people like us on the corner; we'll have more contractors coming to the corner to get warehouse people, workers for other industries. There will be more abuses.
  - We're already seeing more people on the corner now. We do hard work; it's dirty; we get cut; half the time we don't have the tools. We are individual contractors; easy to take advantage of us. Even if we're employees, they take advantage of us and misclassify us as contractors. They know it's hard to file claims, and employers are doing negotiations on the street in ways that ensure that we'll be contractors. We're cheap labor, exploited.
- **Has technology affected your work at all?**
  - Yes, I worked in maintenance in Burbank; that industry was taken over by technology, with machines doing the job now.

- I used to work in warehousing, working pallets. Now they use technology to do jobs.
  - Hand labor will never diminish: (points to his arm) this is the technology that will always be required.
  - Seeing how technology is replacing the labor that people have been doing, it would be good to study the machines that are replacing us. Bring technology classes to labor centers and make training more accessible to us.
- **How is technology prohibiting you from getting work?**
- Sometimes applications are only on-line; it's impossible for people without computers; we need jobs that don't require online applications
  - The future of work has to include day laborers who are displaced from other jobs; we have to recognize informal work as a sector that has value.
- **Closing comments:**
- It's important to have access to resources for wage claims and claims for injuries; we need people at the Labor Commission who can handle cases. People have to make choices about showing up for hearings or going to work. We need more people from Cal OSHA to take complaints for day laborers, who have multiple employers and many different jobs, which makes them very easy for employers to abuse.
  - This work is very important; what would happen if we weren't here? Day laborers are important to the economy; day labor work is work and should be respected and have benefits.
- Yungsuhn Park closed the session by explaining that California has a government committed to workers' rights: improving minimum standards, benefits and access to better jobs, better working conditions, and improving services so they're more accessible, with multiple languages for Workers' Comp, and creating more access to the workforce development system for classes and counseling.