

Challenges and Strategies to Strengthen Global Workers' Rights

Friday May 11th



Summary of Panel Discussion and Workshop:

- Migrant workers' vulnerability in facing human rights and labor rights violations. The situation is even worse now with the immigration raids in the U.S.
- There is a need to cooperate with the different movements in order to advocate for the rights of migrants, unions, NGOs and organizations that are working for the rights of migrants.
- We cannot discuss labor migration resolutions without focusing on the disparities that exist between salaries in developing nations versus the more advanced nations.
- The fight for labor rights has to focus on the rights of workers on both sides of the border. It has to have a global perspective.

Principal Points of Agreement and Recurring Themes:

- It is crucial to better the conditions of workers in migrant communities. Federal and state laws have to be applicable in these workplaces.
- In the U.S. unions are facing immigration raids that neither they nor the communities are prepared for. It is difficult to react to the new legislation that has passed and to the aggressive military-like actions that are being used.
- An immigration reform that is focused on guest worker programs is not a reform. Unions do not advocate this kind of reform because it exploits workers.
- Latinas in the U.S. are the worst paid group, the group that has the highest work-related injuries and deaths. It is crucial then to have this group organize.
- A vicious cycle develops for domestic workers in places like Europe and the U.S., where new migrants are more easily exploited by their employers than ever before. New workers cannot advocate for their rights because they know that there are many more people that are willing to do their job without demanding as much.
- Today, U.S. worker wages are 6 times higher than in Mexico. The situation with migration cannot be resolved if this disparity is not considered. The wage gap is larger today than it was 25 years ago, before there were any free trade agreements.
- Union movements need to focus on the labor rights of all workers in all countries.
- The fight for labor rights is a fight for Human Rights

Points of Disagreement:

- In Canada an unfortunate situation is taking place. Those that exploit migrants the most are other Latinos. We have to face this problem and realize that those taking advantage of migrants are not only non-Latinos.
- We also have to remember that unions have political agendas. When working with them we have to make sure that their propositions are not government mandates.

Measures Proposed:

- We have to think of economic changes that impact not only the situation locally or nationally, but at the international level. This is one of the reasons we need to have movements that collaborate with each other. Working together with religious communities, the labor sectors, unions, etc.
- We need to use more legal tools that would guarantee the protection of rights.
- The only union that is going to work in a global context is one that shares values with all communities. We have to remember that unions began from the migrant movements of Irish, and Italians in the U.S. that were facing anti-immigration sentiments. We have to learn from these histories and insert our own struggles.
- We need to demand that that Mexican government stop the human rights violations that are occurring in Mexico, especially against migrants from other countries.
- We must change public opinion by changing what the press says about migration. The strategy should be to have migrant communities' contact the press so that they also hear their side of the debate and are not just relying on sources that are placing migrants as a danger to society.
- Union movements need to have the leadership of Latinos and migrants. We need to focus on how to best to develop this leadership.