



# iPRESENTE!

FALL 2014 EMPOWERING LATINO IMMIGRANTS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

## DREAM BIG THE INSPIRING STORY OF ALICIA PAREDES

Alicia Paredes isn't afraid of hard work, but when she came to the U.S. from Mexico in 1994 and began working in a dry cleaner, she found it difficult to live the life she wanted. She didn't have many friends, and she struggled to learn English. All that changed when a chance conversation on a Seattle bus led her to Casa Latina.



*Alicia Paredes telling her story at the En Camino Gala*

Because Casa Latina also provided child care, Alicia was able to attend Casa Latina's free English classes. She found supportive teachers who taught her phrases she needed for day-to-day life, and she also found friends. Women would come early to class just to chat, and that group soon became Casa Latina's first women's leadership group. Alicia continues to be close with these friends.

When Alicia needed help finding work as a housecleaner, a Casa Latina volunteer helped her make promotional fliers. After taking a business course, she got her own business license.

**I FELT SO PROUD, AND I SHOWED MY LICENSE TO ALL MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY!**

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## THE BEST INVESTMENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HILARY STERN REFLECTS ON 20 YEARS OF EMPOWERING LATINO IMMIGRANTS

"Hilary," my grandmother said, "get an education. It is the only thing that they can't take away from you." Though her advice was born from persecution in Europe, neither of us had any idea the weight her words would carry as we celebrate Casa Latina's 20th Anniversary.



*Hilary Stern, circa 2001*

Decades after my grandparents immigrated to the U.S., hundreds of Latino immigrant men began arriving in Seattle in the early 90s. They came *en camino*—not knowing what they would find, but knowing what they were looking for: a better opportunity for themselves and their families. Wanting to help, Casa Latina's founders realized that the best way to invest in the community was through education. We couldn't help everybody one by one, but we could teach people to speak up for themselves.

With that goal in mind, we created an ephemeral home, a Casa Latina that manifested itself in the hearts of volunteers, the hands of laborers, and the minds of our students. Though our offices lived in the basement of a condemned building, our mission transcended its temporal walls.

For the first five years, two programs—English classes and street theater—provided immigrants with the necessary skills to survive as day laborers. To our dismay we found that these classes—and education in general—are often a luxury that immigrants cannot afford. This is not because classes at Casa Latina cost any money but because day laborers have to expend all of their time and energy finding work. We opened our first Day Workers' Center in a parking lot in 1999, rooted in the philosophy of popular education and a belief that the people most affected by the issues are the ones most able to solve them. We organized immigrant day laborers and domestic workers so that they could analyze their situation, collectively take action to create work that provides dignity and a living wage, and design educational programs that help them succeed in their new community. The change is evident: today hundreds of immigrants support their families with wages earned through Casa Latina, participate actively in civic conversations, and learn English and job skills to get ahead in life.

**WE COULDN'T HELP EVERYBODY ONE BY ONE, BUT WE COULD TEACH PEOPLE TO SPEAK UP.**

Looking back at the past 20 years, I think my grandmother would be proud of Casa Latina. We've created a place where education is shared among many—I know I learn as much from our members as they learn from me. By working together to create a society where we welcome all new immigrants; where all work has dignity and respect; and where we care for each other as a community, we are proving that no one can take an education away. It's the best investment anyone can make.

As Alicia tells it, “I felt so proud, and I showed my license to all my friends and family! I never thought I would have a business license in the U.S.A.”

Still, things were not easy—just after starting Alicia’s Cleaning Services, Alicia’s husband lost his job. She had to work every day—even when she was sick—to support her family. She also taught her husband to clean offices, and today they are business partners. Alicia says they feel “so lucky” to have more clients than they can take on.

## I DREAM OF HELPING OTHERS SUCCEED THE WAY CASA LATINA HELPED ME.

With one son attending the Foster School of Business at the University of Washington and another at an excellent private school, Alicia now feels like many of her dreams are coming true. She even got to take her first long vacation this year!

Alicia isn’t done working hard and dreaming big. She wants to grow her business and give back to her community. “I want to employ many workers. I want to pay a fair salary and give full medical and dental benefits. I dream of helping others succeed the way Casa Latina helped me.”

## JOIN THE FAMILY

Would you like to know more about Casa Latina? There are several ways to be *parte de la familia*.



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Find us on the web at  
www.casa-latina.org

Contribute at  
www.casa-latina.org/donate

# TINY REVOLUTIONS

## CASA LATINA SPARKS CHANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

It’s a little known fact, but Casa Latina—the Seattle-grown worker center organizing day laborers and domestic workers—has an impact far beyond its home on the corner of 17th and Jackson. In truth, the impact spreads far beyond even the Puget Sound area. Time and again, Casa Latina stands out as a national leader among worker centers because of the innovative models and relationships that we pilot, test, and share.

### NDLON & CASA LATINA PAVE THE ROAD TO CHANGE



Hilary Stern and Pablo Alvarado

When Casa Latina first opened its doors in 1994, it was one of only a handful of worker centers around the country. Others have opened since then, and in 2001 we helped found the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) to build a national movement. Together we have advanced the rights of immigrant workers and gained, among other victories, the right for day laborers to seek work in public anywhere in the country. At Casa Latina’s recent En Camino 20th Anniversary Gala, we welcomed NDLON Executive Director Pablo Alvarado as our keynote speaker. Pablo heralded Casa Latina as a “guiding light to follow,” being the “only worker center in the country with a \$16 minimum wage.”

### SOLIDARITY AMONG DAY LABORERS AND UNIONS

As a worker rights organization, Casa Latina’s affiliation with the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and the M. L. King County Labor Council has served as a national example of the power of productive partnerships between worker centers and labor unions—an alliance that has not been the norm in many parts of the country. By joining forces, Casa Latina and our labor partners have led successful legislative campaigns to fight wage theft and to help raise the minimum wage in Seattle to an unprecedented \$15/hour. The power of this relationship was celebrated earlier this year when National AFL-CIO Vice President Tefere Gebre visited Casa Latina to present our affiliation charter. Together we are stronger, and we are better able to advance the rights of all workers.



Tefere Gebre (National AFL-CIO), David Freiboth (M.L. King County Labor Council), and Hilary Stern

### MACHETE CHOPS PAPERWORK ACROSS THE COUNTRY



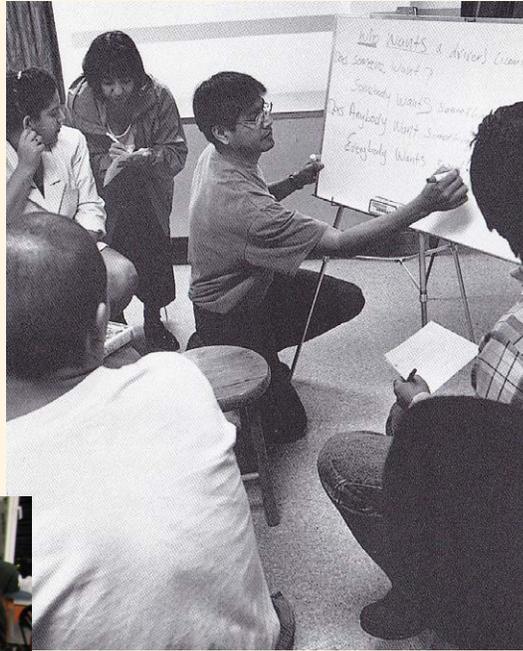
Every morning Casa Latina’s worker center holds a lottery to determine the order of job dispatch, and every morning many of our members walk away winners—they walk away with a job for the day and hope for the future. Organizing this process used to be tedious, but in 2009 we began developing a software solution called Machete to reduce paperwork and streamline worker dispatch. Since then we’ve continued developing Machete and have shared it with seventeen worker centers around the country. Features like online work orders and electronic worker sign-in automate time-consuming tasks previously done by hand. As many centers have only a few staff members, reducing paperwork means that each day more members can walk away winners.

**TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER, AND WE ARE BETTER ABLE TO ADVANCE THE RIGHTS OF ALL WORKERS.**

# GIVING WORKERS A VOICE

## ESL AT CASA LATINA

For twenty years, Casa Latina has offered English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in a variety of settings—from the cafeteria at the Millionair Club, to a tiny, homemade classroom in the parking lot at the first worker center in Belltown, to today's third story classrooms at Casa Latina's facility in the Central District. While the location has changed, a constant approach has been to offer ESL as more than just teaching a language. English classes at Casa Latina are a tool for transformation, providing students the skills to participate in society and to reflect upon and improve their own reality.



Casa Latina ESL class at the Millionair Club



As ESL Coordinator Emily Gaggia explains, Casa Latina's English classes are "super specific to the students' lives"—the lives of immigrant workers. In any class, the topic may involve talking to a boss about wages, taking a Metro bus across town, or calling a landlord about a broken window. While providing skills for navigating life in the U.S., lessons also raise the political consciousness of the students. A student will practice telling a landlord about that broken window while also learning about renters' rights.



Emily Gaggia sharing Casa Latina ESL materials at a national assembly of worker centers

**WHILE PROVIDING SKILLS FOR NAVIGATING LIFE IN THE U.S., LESSONS ALSO RAISE THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE STUDENTS.**

Casa Latina's student-centered approach to ESL means the curriculum consists of "done in a day" lessons. Each class is a discrete topic which provides a valuable lesson—a key phrase or useful vocabulary—which students can immediately apply in their lives. This approach makes class attendance relevant and practical amidst the unpredictable schedules of the day laborers whom Casa Latina serves.

For twenty years, Casa Latina's ESL program has been providing language skills which communicate the path to social change. Today, we are proud that elements of our ESL curriculum are emulated at day worker centers around the country, empowering immigrant workers here in Seattle and throughout the United States.

# THANK YOU COMMUNITY PARTNERS!

Your support at the En Camino 20th Anniversary Gala on September 13 demonstrates your strong commitment to the Latino community. ¡Mil gracias!

## EMPLOY!



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**COMCAST**

## EDUCATE!



## ENGAGE!

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**IN HONOR OF OUR  
20TH ANNIVERSARY  
THIS ISSUE PRESENTS**



The Best Investment:  
Reflections 1994-2014



Dream Big:  
The Inspiring Story of  
Alicia Paredes



Giving Workers a Voice:  
ESL at Casa Latina

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**HIRE A WORKER**

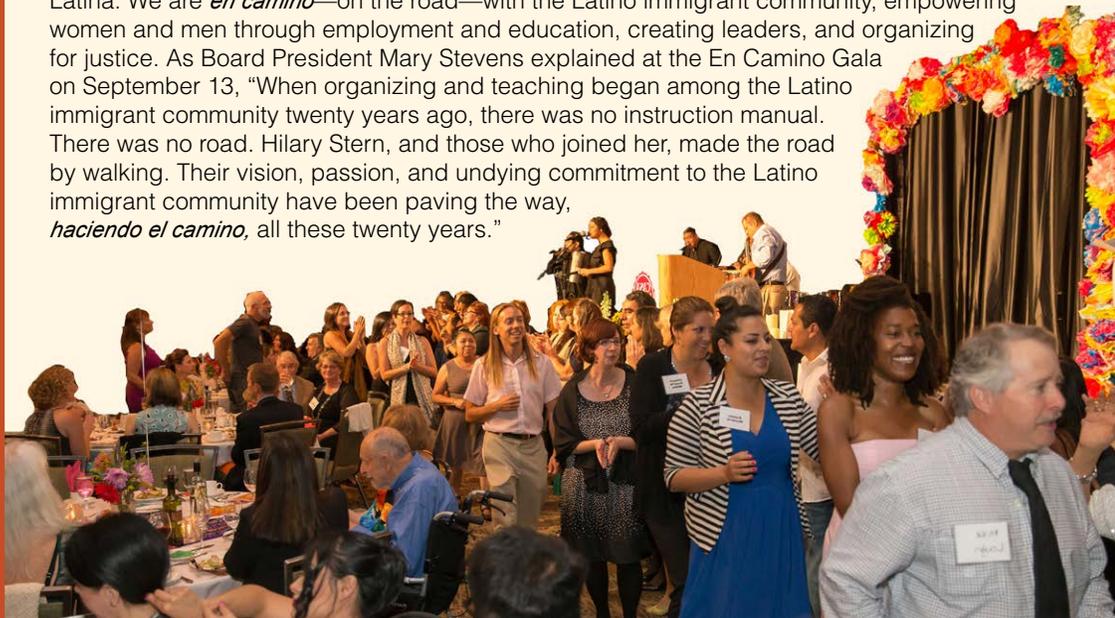
Do you have roses to winterize, a bathroom to scrub, or a picket fence to paint? Imagine if getting it done were as easy as dialing a phone. With the help of Casa Latina day laborers and domestic workers it is!



To hire a worker,  
call 206.956.0779

**EN CAMINO 20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA  
A STANDING OVATION FOR OUR GUESTS!**

Why name our new fundraising gala En Camino? You may know the famous passage from a poem by Antonio Machado: *Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace camino al andar.* These words, "Walker, there is no road. We make the road by walking," perfectly capture the history of Casa Latina. We are *en camino*—on the road—with the Latino immigrant community, empowering women and men through employment and education, creating leaders, and organizing for justice. As Board President Mary Stevens explained at the En Camino Gala on September 13, "When organizing and teaching began among the Latino immigrant community twenty years ago, there was no instruction manual. There was no road. Hilary Stern, and those who joined her, made the road by walking. Their vision, passion, and undying commitment to the Latino immigrant community have been paving the way, *haciendo el camino*, all these twenty years."



**EN CAMINO RAISED OVER \$206,000 FOR  
CASA LATINA'S PROGRAMS. THANK YOU TO OUR  
GENEROUS DONORS!**