



iPRESENTE!

SUMMER 2015 EMPOWERING LATINO IMMIGRANTS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

THE WILD WEST

AN INTERVIEW
WITH AI-JEN POO

In 2014, Ai-jen Poo received the MacArthur “Genius” Award for organizing domestic workers. She is the director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and a long-time friend of Casa Latina.

We're thrilled that she will be the keynote speaker at Casa Latina's En Camino Gala on October 3. We spoke



Ai-jen Poo (right) and Casa Latina Executive Director Hilary Stern

with Ai-jen by phone as she drove to Washington, DC. Her tone was soft but firm; her words revealed a visionary wisdom.

CL: You founded NDWA, a coalition of thirty-nine organizations across the country advocating for the rights of domestic workers, in 2007. What were some of the challenges you saw individual domestic workers facing?

DOMESTIC WORKERS ARE, ACROSS THE BOARD, UNDERVALUED, UNDERPAID, OVERWORKED.

AP: The domestic work industry is like the Wild West. You just never quite know what you're going to get. Domestic workers are, across the board, undervalued, underpaid, overworked.

CL: Why create a national group when local ones already existed?

AP: Our local organizations felt the need to break out of our local

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THE BEST LUCK

AN HOUR IN THE LIFE OF CASA LATINA'S WORKERS



Estuardo, a Casa Latina member-worker, volunteers most mornings to help with dispatch.

Workers have been filing into Casa Latina's Day Worker Center (DWC) since 6:30am, member ID cards in hand, hoping for a day's work. 48% of our workers first come to Casa Latina earning less than \$15,000 a year, falling under the standard threshold for extreme poverty. The DWC provides employment opportunities to help them improve their livelihood, and their worn faces belie a deep, urgent desire to work.

A booming voice calls the group to order and the workers settle into a familiar routine: La Rifa—the raffle. During Casa Latina's busy season the DWC will dispatch about 15 jobs every weekday and as many as 80 jobs on

Saturdays. La Rifa determines who gets which job. Estuardo, a volunteer and worker, pulls ID cards one at a time from a large blue jug. This will be, loosely, the order in which workers receive jobs.

48% OF OUR WORKERS ARRIVE EARNING LESS THAN \$15,000 A YEAR, FALLING UNDER THE THRESHOLD FOR EXTREME POVERTY.

But La Rifa is only part of the story—individual workers also have a hand in the order of dispatch. When an employer calls, they can request skills, such as house painting, gardening, or a particular level of English. The DWC ensures that the first worker on the list with the required skills gets the job—which means the more skills an individual has the more likely he or she is to work. This system encourages workers to build a ladder out of poverty—and our English classes and skills trainings are often the first rungs of that ladder.

Panfilo folds his tall body into a chair. When his name comes up late in the raffle—he probably won't receive a job—he explains why he still likes the system. “We're all able to participate. There is something for everyone. If I see that I'm not going to get a job, I have time to figure out a new plan.”

When La Rifa is over, a second voice calls out work orders: “Raul! Yardwork, eight hours, \$16 an hour, transportation provided!” What follows is the most poignant moment of dispatch: Raul must decide whether he will accept the job. If he declines, he'll be moved to the bottom of the dispatch list. Sí—yes—is the obvious answer, but it's important to weigh his



Deciding whether to accept a job can be tricky, but this worker said, “Sí—yes!”

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MOVED TO TEARS
A SPECIAL GIVEBIG GIFT

Our staff was moved to tears, literally, by one particular gift that arrived during GiveBIG—The Seattle Foundation’s 24-hour community giving event. Juan Diaz Mauricio is a participant in our day worker



program and a student in our ESL classes. He heard about GiveBIG and wanted to help Casa Latina in appreciation

for the opportunities that Casa Latina has provided him—so he donated this \$100 bill. Wow! It’s so impressive to see how Casa Latina members support each other!

Thanks to Juan and all our other supporters, including a special anonymous donor who matched the first \$5,000 in gifts, we raised an amazing \$31,330 during GiveBIG!

THANK YOU!
¡MIL GRACIAS!



SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2015
WA State Convention Center
Seattle, WA

Join Casa Latina for a night of inspiration and solidarity as we celebrate and support the journey of Latino immigrant workers.



THE DAPA/DACA DEBACLE
“THE HARDEST THING IS WAITING.”

“The hardest thing now is waiting,” says Maricela Osorio. A Mexican immigrant and Casa Latina member, Maricela lives and works in Seattle while raising four daughters—three here in the US and one, the oldest, whom she hasn’t seen in 14 years, in Oaxaca, Mexico. She harbors a desperate hope that political changes in the next months will enable her to reunite her family—whether that’s in Mexico or the United States.

In November of 2014, President Obama promised to help families like Maricela’s stay together with an executive action on immigration. Among other actions Obama promised to provide 4 million immigrants with work permits and deportation relief in the form of two programs: Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA is for immigrant parents whose children were born in the US) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA+ is for young adults who have lived all but the very beginning of their lives in the US). How would these programs help someone like Maricela?

LEADING EXPERTS SAYS DAPA/DACA IS LEGAL AND IT’S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE NEW PROGRAMS ARE IMPLEMENTED.



Casa Latina helps immigrants share their stories with politicians like Seattle Mayor Ed Murray (above right) who can help change unjust practices at the city, state, and national levels.

Neither DAPA nor DACA+ are a path to citizenship; however, DAPA would protect Maricela and her husband from deportation. She would no longer live in fear of being



Maricela has been separated from her child for 14 years.

forcefully separated from her daughters, and the work permit would help her secure a job with a minimum wage, mandatory breaks, time off, and—hopefully—health insurance. With only informal employment, it’s a struggle to support a family of six and send remittances to Mexico.

Casa Latina is in the process of designing an extended program to support DAPA applicants in gathering their documentation for the application process and saving for the \$465 DAPA fee. Casa Latina will also partner with local organizations that can provide legal advice to participants.

Unfortunately, 26 states, led by Texas, have sued the US government saying that the program would “cause significant economic injury to their fiscal interests.” The District Court in Brownsville, Texas, where the suit was initially filed, issued an injunction in February to stop the implementation of DAPA/

DACA+. In May, a federal appellate court upheld that injunction. Now, Maricela fearfully and hopefully waits to see whether the same appellate court will deny the legality of DAPA/DACA+. While it’s a bit of a debacle at the moment, leading experts say DAPA/DACA+ is legal, and it’s only a matter of time until it’s implemented.

Casa Latina recognizes the Texas lawsuit as a political, anti-immigrant attack, and the consequences for families—Maricela’s included—are devastating. DAPA/DACA+ should be implemented immediately. It’s not a political question but a question of whether or not the US will provide “justice for all.” Maricela says, “The little girl I left [in Mexico] is a young woman now. Maybe the best years of her life have passed and I missed them.” Maricela’s story and so many others inspire Casa Latina to continue fighting for immigration policies that keep families together.

THE TEXAS LAWSUIT IS A POLITICAL, ANTI-IMMIGRANT ATTACK AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR FAMILIES—MARICELA’S INCLUDED—ARE DEVASTATING.



Ai-jen meets with Casa Latina workers and staff before discussing dignity and economic justice at Citizen University '15.

workers went on strike, there's not a single sector of our economy that wouldn't be affected.

CL: What is Caring Across Generations (CAG) and the "care crisis"?

WE HAVE NO INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT OUR COMING CAREGIVING NEEDS.

AP: CAG is a national campaign bringing families and communities together to prepare for the future caregiving needs that we will have. We're about to have the largest older population we've ever had and we have no infrastructure in place to support the caregiving needs that will result. [CAG focuses on culture change work; policy advocacy; online campaigning; and civic engagement—in order to make domestic work a more dignified job and to improve the standard of care for care receivers.]

CL: Many caregivers don't have the resources they need to take care of their own families. Do you see CAG as a solution that will affect them and change their lives?



Ai-jen (center) calls her grandmother (left) and mother (right) her greatest role models.

AP: It will fundamentally do that. That's really the place where we started—recognizing that we need a strong caregiving workforce that can not only sustain themselves, but support their families and ultimately thrive. In order to do that we're going to need to do everything from creating a path to citizenship for the undocumented caregiving workforce to ensuring that working parents who are professional caregivers can also take care of their families on living wages with benefits.

CL: Absolutely. Can you describe the relationship between Casa Latina, CAG, and NDWA?

AP: Casa Latina is one of the leading members of NDWA and was one of the founding member organizations. CL has been a source of both inspiration and leadership for us as we imagine pathways to legal status for undocumented caregivers, as we fight for recognition and respect and fair wages for the caregiving workforce, and as we start to think about how we can work together with families and consumers and our elders.

IF ALL DOMESTIC WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE, THERE'S NOT A SINGLE SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY THAT WOULDN'T BE AFFECTED.

www.caringacross.org. I've also recently published a book called *The Age of Dignity*, which along with www.caringacrossamerica.com, helps families prepare for their future caregiving needs. And, of course, they can contact Casa Latina and get involved locally.

contexts in order to connect to the groups in other parts of the country to share strategies, to find more support, and to feel connected to something larger.

CL: You call domestic work the work that makes all other work possible. Why?

AP: In any given city, if you think about all of the people who do domestic care work, whether it's caring for children or elders or cleaning homes—if all of those

NEED HELP?

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Do you have a closet to organize? Or a bathroom to scrub? Let us help!



Casa Latina housecleaners are available six days a week, and hiring is easy!

options—how hard will the work be? Who is the boss? What are the wages?

EVEN IN LA RIFA THE BEST LUCK IS MADE WITH HARD WORK.

Working through Casa Latina provides a greater level of security on the job. Instances of wage theft and abuse are much lower for workers at Casa Latina, but any day worker regularly walks into an unknown workplace. Every dispatch means that another person must face the unknown and leap forward on faith. After a pause and a couple of questions, Raul leaps.



Panfilo eventually hears his name too, but it isn't for a job. After the regular raffle, the workers have a

second to distribute two chores: coffee and cleaning duty. It's completely voluntary to enter the chores raffle, but in exchange for a little extra work, Panfilo and a second volunteer will be at the top of the dispatch list tomorrow. Both are virtually guaranteed a paid job the next day, and it's a good reminder that even in La Rifa the best luck is made with hard work.

CL: How can women and men interested in supporting CAG learn more or get involved?

AP: They can go to our website at



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CASA LATINA MEMBER JUAN CARRANZA

WORKING FROM THE HEART

One might not guess that Juan Carranza, a soft-spoken and humble Casa Latina member, has traveled and worked the length and breadth of the US. Yet since his arrival in the US over 35 years ago, Juan has supervised construction companies, climbed avocado trees, and built baseball fields—working from Boston to California and everywhere in between.

Now, Juan feels privileged, thanks to Casa Latina's programs, to focus on his favorite work: gardening. Casa Latina has sent Juan to gardening jobs at over 100 homes in Seattle, and Juan has jumped at the chance to do nearly every skills training we offer.

Juan is a hard worker, and his commitment to self-improvement has been fostered by Casa Latina. "Casa Latina is a place...for those who want to better themselves," Juan says when he tells people about our jobs program. He thinks people should be willing



Donors and Casa Latina have helped Juan build his gardening skills. Now his work is so good that employers often pay him "significantly more than the standard."

to "start at the bottom" and climb their way up through hard work and perseverance—whether that means taking English classes and job skills trainings or giving 110% to a job.

Juan has a big heart and sincerely supports everyone around him. He comes to Casa Latina regularly as a volunteer to care for the gardens because he takes pride in treating Casa Latina as a reflection of himself. When he notices other members struggling in class or at work, Juan lends a hand, saying "we should help them... people need support."

At times Juan has been one of those people who "need support," but thanks to Casa Latina and donors like you Juan has "learned to live a different life." He always comes to work with a bright demeanor, and his can-do attitude rubs off on others. Your support catalyzes what may be Juan's most important job ever—inspiring others.