

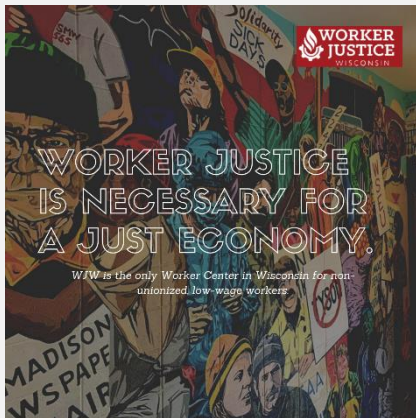


1602 S. Park St, Room 116
Madison, WI 53718
608-255-0376
www.workerjustice.org

Winter Newsletter, February 2021

Worker Justice Wisconsin's Mission: Worker Justice Wisconsin advances justice in our community by building collective worker power together with Faith and Labor.

TOTAL WAGE THEFT WAGES RECOVERED in 2020: \$141,040



New Year- New Plan- New Future

During the latter part of 2020, Worker Justice Wisconsin underwent a strategic planning process where the Board of Directors and staff together decided to shift our worker center from primarily service-leaning to a model focused on collective worker organizing. We believe this is the best way to stop workplace injustices before they start!

Central to building collective worker power is a strong membership program that fosters community bonds. To that end, WJW will initiate

its worker membership program in May of this year, raising consciousness about class exploitation and oppression, demonstrating why building worker power in collective actions is necessary for systemic change, and training workers to be organizing leaders.

Our vital community partners in this program are religious congregations, labor unions and other individual and community members committed to economic and social justice in the workplace. For the last several months we have been meeting with faith and labor leaders in order to increase awareness about the problems that non-unionized and immigrant workers face (problems exacerbated during the pandemic) and to strengthen our connections to a community of support for WJW worker-led actions and campaigns. We invite these partners to become WJW members to show solidarity and increase the power of the coalition around workers as they stand up for their rights. In summary, the elements of this WJW strategic plan are:

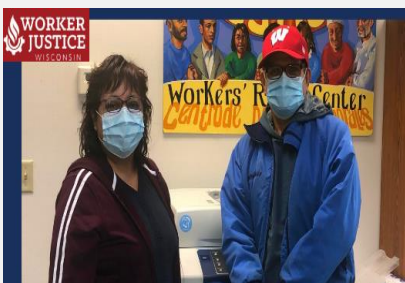
- ✓ A worker membership and organizing program that includes regular trainings, strategy sessions and celebrations.
- ✓ Faith community, union, and individual supporter membership program to build the power of the coalition for economic, racial and immigrant justice in the workplace. (Suggested minimum donation of \$100/organization/year or \$60/individual/year)
- ✓ Education and engagement with faith communities and labor unions

Please join us by becoming a WJW member and attending some of our regular trainings, strategy sessions and celebrations during 2021! For more information, contact us at info@workerjustice.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).

Announcements:

- The **WJW Annual Meeting** will take place on 9th from 6-00-7:30 pm. Look for an email invitation coming soon or contact info@workerjustice.org for the Zoom link.
- Worker Justice Wisconsin will have an online fundraiser in April-May this year. Please consider supporting us during this pivotal time. We'll be reaching out with more information soon.
- Continuing COVID-19 concerns again mean we will be unable to have the Faith Labor Breakfast this spring. However, if possible, we plan to have a celebration event in a park this summer to thank all of you for your amazing support this last year, and to bring together the whole WJW community of workers, religious and labor leaders, and community supporters. More information coming soon!

Worker's Corner



José Manuel Perez

En español (English translation follows):

“Estoy agradecido con el Centro de Derechos Laborales porque ellos me ayudaron a recibir mi pago, y quiero invitar a todas esas personas que tienen algún problema con su pago – pueden pedir ayuda. ¡Sí se puede

recuperar su dinero! Por eso los invito a que se acerquen al Centro de Derechos Laborales y no tengan miedo. Hoy gracias a ellos estoy recuperando 3 meses de sueldo que daba por perdido y estoy muy contento y agradecido por su apoyo. ¡Ellos están dispuestos a ayudarte con tu problema y exigir nuestros derechos!”

“I am grateful to Worker Justice Wisconsin because they helped me recover my unpaid wages, and I want to invite everyone having wage problems – you can ask for help. Yes, you can get your unpaid wages back! So I invite you to come to Worker Justice Wisconsin and don't be afraid. Today, thanks to them, I have recovered 3 months of wages that I thought I'd never see, and I'm very happy and grateful for their support. They are ready to help you with your workplace problems and to demand our rights!”



Take Action

Oakwood Village

Please support Oakwood Village employees as they face a significant understaffing crisis. Over 300 employees were either terminated or left last year, and there were recently as many as 150 unfilled positions. This has led to employee burnout, with turnover rates over 86% in some departments. Instead of listening to their concerns, Oakwood executives have changed benefits and working conditions are in violation of federal labor laws.

As SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin calls for a fair contract for Oakwood employees, please support them by:

1. Signing and sharing this petition: bit.ly/SupportOakwoodHeroes.
2. Calling/emailing the Oakwood CEO Reginald Hislop III: Phone: 608-230-4365; Email: reginald.hislop@oakwoodvillage.net
3. Attending the petition delivery to CEO when the time comes

Amplifying the workers' voices and helping Oakwood know that our community and congregations are paying attention can make a difference!

Share this COVID-19 Resource!

The Dignity at Work Coalition has released videos in English and Spanish informing Dane County and Wisconsin workers of their rights during this COVID-19 pandemic.

In these videos, Dra. Patricia Tellez-Girón, Associate Professor Dept. of Family Medicine, UW School of Medicine and Public Health explains the importance of correctly wearing a mask. The videos also cover social distancing, cleaning of high-touch surfaces, urges workers to stay home if they are feeling sick, and provides contact numbers for workers to call if they need individual advocacy or assistance.

Please distribute these link to your networks!

- Dane County Public Health (English): <https://youtu.be/COsCcAdgdXs>
- Dane County Public Health (Spanish): <https://youtu.be/NaMNqmWssOQ>

- State of Wisconsin (English): <https://youtu.be/SiGqBQrFnI8>
- State of Wisconsin (Spanish): <https://youtu.be/XFB5ZQv4QIY>



Faith Outreach Update:

Worker Justice WI has been intentionally working to foster and strengthen new and old relationships with the many Dane County religious communities. Grace Shockman has stepped in as our new faith outreach coordinator and since coming on board has connected with 22 congregations of various faith traditions. Some of the communities include: religious leaders and congregation representatives from Glenwood Moravian and Lakeview Moravian Churches, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish, Lighthouse Church, Beth Israel Center, Messiah Lutheran, and Lake Edge UCC. IN conversation with faith communities we've been asking for their involvement in three primary ways:

1. Joining our efforts in building collective worker power through participation in our membership program, contributing a minimum annual membership fee of \$100, and providing a reliable contact person.
2. Hosting an annual Labor in the Pulpit/On the Bimah/In the Minbar service

3. Signing onto our Faith and Labor Statement when available.

Outreach to faith communities has been very rewarding, as opportunities for authentic and long-term relationships are being laid down. This process has opened our eyes to the importance of understanding the mission, priorities, and work of faith communities and has also allowed us to ask how we too can be a resource. We continue to consider creative ways for engaging our collective audiences around the intersections of labor issues, knowing that racial justice, housing and food insecurity, immigration, human trafficking, and the effects of COVID-19 are all related to the work we do at Worker Justice WI. It is just the beginning of many exciting partnerships with faith communities!

The Work Continues:

Worker Justice Wisconsin is always looking into the ways to educate and empower workers. One great way to ensure equitable pay and a safe working environment is for workers to come together to form a cooperative.

Have you ever thought about being your own boss? Did you know that Worker Justice Wisconsin offers resources and education on how to start your own worker cooperative? If you would like to learn more about how a co-op works and how it could make you your own boss, contact Socorro or Kristen at 608-255-0376. Popular industries that have created successful cooperatives include housekeeping, painting and skilled trades.

Spotlight on the Board



**Mary Bell –
Worker Justice Wisconsin Treasurer**

Each newsletter will include a spotlight on a current Worker Justice Wisconsin Board Member. As each of them has contributed in amazing ways, we would like to share some of the great histories that not only brought these wonderful people to our organization but also learn about what drives them to continue to fight for the rights of workers.

*“Mary has always been one of my favorite people to talk with since starting at WJW. She has a vibrant history and I am very excited to share her story and thoughts with you.”
~Sarah Soliman, Office Manager*

Mary, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I am a retired educator and union activist, a firm believer in the positive impact unions have in creating not just fair wages and safe working conditions, but in lifting the conditions for all working families and the general welfare of the entire community.

What is your involvement with WJW and its previous incarnations (ICWJ and the WRC)?

In 2008, I became a donor to the Interfaith Coalition (ICWJ, one of the two organizations that formed Worker Justice Wisconsin in 2017). As President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council in 2011, when the

Governor introduced Act 10, the Interfaith Coalition and the Workers' Rights Center were both visible and vocal in that fight for worker rights, including collective bargaining. Since my retirement, I have served as a board member and then board chair.

What has motivated you to be on the board and stay involved throughout the years?

Beyond the crisis experience of 2011, I remain active with Worker Justice Wisconsin because of the unique and critical position it serves for workers who often serve in the most underpaid and unsafe workplaces, and are the most vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and abuse on the job. In assisting workers not only to reclaim wages, the work of the organization is to build cohesive worker power through collective action so that employers who knowingly practice dangerous and abusive practices find it more difficult to do so, because instead of individual workers, they meet the force of a group who join their interests together.

What is your vision and hope for the future of Worker Justice Wisconsin?

My hope is that Worker Justice Wisconsin can become even stronger in the fight for the rights of all workers. The merger between ICWJ and the WRC has given us the opportunity to build a broader community of support that can be enlisted not just when an employer acts badly, but in awareness and understanding of everyone's role in assuring workplace justice for all.

**Worker Justice Wisconsin
Board of Directors**

- Kurt Kobelt- President*
- Jim Cavanaugh – Vice President*
- Mary Bell – Treasurer*
- Saul M. Castillo – Secretary*
- Paulette Harder*
- Daniela Juarez*
- Victoria Gutierrez*
- Jeff Mehrhoff*
- Matt Robles*
- Charity Schmidt*
- Scott Watson*
- Ekpevi Ayite di Costa*
- Pastor Jacobo Castillo*
- Sister M. McDonnell*

Worker Justice Wisconsin - Staff

- Rebecca Meier-Rao – Executive Director*
- Kristen Taylor – Worker Center Manager*
- Sarah R. Soliman – Office Manager*
- Socorro Cortez- Worker Center Advocate*
- Grace Shockman – Outreach Coordinator*

*And a special thanks to our great
volunteers and interns...
Stefania Sani, Anna Rossi and
Elizabeth Euller*

Please visit us for all up to date events
and happenings at:
www.workerjustice.org



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