

SEP campaigns among immigrant workers in Maywood, California

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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party's presidential campaign have received a warm response from workers and youth in Maywood, California, a predominantly Hispanic city in southeast Los Angeles County. SEP Presidential candidate Jerry White will be speaking at a meeting in Maywood on Thursday. (click here for meeting details).

According to the 2010 Census, Maywood's has a population of about 27,000, with 97 percent of Hispanic or Latino origin. Most residents are from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.

Maywood, the third-smallest incorporated city in the county, has faced continuous financial and political crises. In 2010, it became the first municipality in the state to dismantle its police department and lay off all city employees except for the city manager, city attorney and elected officials. All municipal services are contracted to outside agencies.

The experiences of Maywood have proven that the election of Latino politicians is not a solution to the budget cuts, unemployment and discrimination that immigrant workers and youth face.

White's statement calling for full rights to immigrant workers, distributed in both English and Spanish, won a powerful response. The statement highlights the role of the Obama administration in intensifying the attack on immigrant workers, as part of an attack on the working class as a whole.

SEP supporters went door-to-door in the neighborhood and found workers and youth eager to discuss the socialist program in the 2012 elections.

Carmen, a housewife, spoke to us in Spanish. Her husband works as a carpenter, and they have three children, 7 years, 5 years, and two months old. They originally came from Michoacan, Mexico. "I don't like Obama because he's not doing what he said he was

going to do. He said he was going to do something for the immigrant workers. He said there was going to be an amnesty, but nothing happened.

"Our children are covered by Medi-Cal, but I just received a letter from them that in May we can not use it anymore. They are cutting the children off of the benefits because my husband supposedly makes too much money. He is a carpenter, and he works when there is work. But sometimes there are weeks when he does not have work at all.

"Medi-Cal only covers the children, not the parents. If my husband or I get sick, we have to pay for the doctor's visit, which is \$50, plus medicine. For us, \$50 is a lot of money."

Robby, 18, is taking an adult education math class to get his high school equivalency diploma or GED, General Education Development. "When they announced that they would be cutting adult ed, many people weren't happy. Hopefully it won't happen because everybody wants to get their GED. I want to get it so I can go on to community college."

Maria Morales, 24, attended Crescent College and got her license to be a phlebotomist. "Right now I'm bartending as a part-time job because I'm waiting to get a job in my profession. I did work as a medical assistant for a while, but it's really hard to find a job.

"I don't see any difference between Obama and the other politicians. He's the same. That's the way I see it. He said people were going to have more jobs. And gas is more expensive than ever. I have my own apartment, and it's very hard to make ends meet."

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Buenaventura Caballero, 83, is retired after 14 years working for a company that made filters. He's originally from El Salvador and spoke to us in Spanish.

“Nobody’s doing anything for the workers, I mean all the workers, not just Latinos.

“I get a small pension and \$550 in Social Security a month. I have Medi-Cal and Medicare, and it covers doctor’s visits and medications. If my children weren’t helping us, my wife and I wouldn’t be able to live here. My sons work as truck drivers in Houston, Texas. All the prices are so high.

“Workers have to unite in order to get better conditions.”

Anna has been working for the Post Office for 21 years. “Right now we’re having a lot of problems. I’m lucky that I haven’t been laid off, but many others have been. There’s a lot of tension at our site. We used to do just bulk mail, and they have added first class and priority mail. Many workers, including a lot of temporary workers, have been transferred to our building.

“It’s so overcrowded that no one can do their job properly. We’re in there like sardines. People are coming in all around the clock. I work the night shift where we have about 150 workers. During the day there are about 400. Years ago, the manager on the floor would meet with us regularly and ask us how we could improve things. That doesn’t happen anymore.

Asked about the role of the union, she said, “They’re not doing anything at all. Our union leader is never there at all. We never see him.

“Obama promised so much,” Anna added, “and I haven’t seen anything coming through for us.”



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