Every year millions of dollars are stolen from workers because employers willingly skirt wage and hour laws. Wage theft affects everyone, from workers to businesses and residents of any community.

How Do You Know if You Are a Victim of Wage Theft?
You could be a victim of wage theft if you are an employee and:
- you are not paid the minimum wage
- your tips are stolen from you
- you are forced to work off the clock
- you are not paid overtime for hours worked beyond 40 hours in 7 days
- you are misclassified as an independent contractor or a salaried employee.

Common Questions Regarding Wage Theft:
- How long after a possible wage theft incident do I have to file a wage claim with the Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS)? DWS should investigate claims dating back three years (and there is no time limit if the wage theft has been continuous).
- What is ABQ’s minimum wage? $8.80 from Jan 1st, 2017.
- What is Bernalillo County’s minimum wage? $8.70 from Jan 1st, 2017.
- Can I file a complaint regardless of my status? Yes, you can. All workers have the right to file a wage claim, regardless of their immigration status. In addition, federal, state and local laws prohibit retaliation against a worker for filing a claim and exercising their rights.

If you would like to get involved, El CENTRO is recruiting new members for their worker’s rights committee. Contact Marco Nuñez at mmendez_elcentro@yahoo.com, Claudia Garcia cigarcia_elcentro@yahoo.com or call 505-246-1627.

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Immigrant Families, Faith Leaders, Victims and Civil Rights Advocates and Business Leaders Urge County Commission to Reaffirm Bernalillo County as an Immigrant Friendly County

In the wake of executive orders issued by the Trump administration that create a blueprint for mass deportation in addition to an uptick of ICE activity targeting Albuquerque's immigrant communities in past weeks, immigrant and refugee families, faith leaders, victims and civil rights advocates and business leaders urged the Bernalillo County Commission to vote in favor of a resolution reaffirming its status as an Immigrant Friendly County. The resolution was passed on a bi-partisan vote with the contributions of low-wage workers, to inform workers about their rights, and to continue to organize workers. Immigrant workers are the backbone of the global economy, yet are often the workers that face the most exploitation in the workplace. According to a study done by Somos Un Pueblo Unido in 2013 about Mexican immigrant workers and wage theft in New Mexico: 27.22% had experienced at least one instance of wage theft and 18% experienced abuse in their workplace.

Wage theft is not limited to undocumented immigrants. 22% of documented immigrants also suffered wage theft. Violating labor rights harms local economy & impacts workers from every background. We are planning a whole month of activities honoring our workers. Throughout this month, we will continue to inform workers about labor protections already established by law, we will organize workers to better working conditions at their workplace, and we will fight for new laws that further the dignified treatment of workers and their families.

We kicked off our month-long activities by participating in the Cesar Chavez March. At the cultural event, we set up a photo booth to send a message to Mayor Berry that he must not start the dangerous practice again of having ICE at the Prisoner Transport Center.

On April 7th from 5:30 pm to 7 pm, we will have a Labor Law Clinic in collaboration with the UNM Law Clinic at our office. Photos from previous years’ events:

If you would like to get involved, or learn more about workers’ rights, El CENTRO is recruiting new members for their worker’s rights committee. Contact Marco Nuñez at mmendez_elcentro@yahoo.com, Marian Mendez at mmendez_elcentro@yahoo.com, Claudia Garcia cigarcia_elcentro@yahoo.com or call 505-246-1627.

Stay tuned! We are doing outreach at different community places such as schools and churches to promote labor rights, and we will do media coverage on Spanish speaking news.


THE WORK OF OUR MEMBERS IS VITAL IN LA LUCHA! HIGHLIGHTING OUR MEMBERS: JESSICA RODRIGUEZ

We, at El CENTRO, are grateful for all the work our members, donors, and allies contribute every single day. Our members are constantly supporting our work and inspiring each other to keep fighting. Every day, our families continue to fight to keep our communities safe and healthy. In this month’s bulletin, we want to highlight our member Jessica Rodriguez, a hardworking business owner, mother, wife, and activist, and student. Jessica, one of El CENTRO’s Family Defenders, has been a key participant in many of our actions. She was our spokesperson at our press conference on Trump’s anti-immigrant/refugee executive orders, and she, along with her two daughters, spoke in front of the APS board, City Council, and Bernalillo County Commission. At these events, she shared her experiences and urged elected officials to approve policies to protect immigrant families.

Besides being a fantastic active member, Jessica is also a proud mother of two children, owns her own professional clown business called Payasita Lollipop, works cleaning houses, and currently takes classes through Encuentro to become a professional caregiver. She began working with El CENTRO because she wanted to educate others about their rights, to advocate for social justice, and to inspire others to join the fight against draconian laws that strip the rights of immigrant, refugees, and workers.

Although the current threats to immigrant and refugee families enrage Jessica, she uses her anger to motivate her. She calls on others in our community to not let fear be an impediment and invites others to join the movement and fight back. She also calls on allies to not remain silent, to stand by our community, and to educate others that immigrants are hard workers and that we are here to stay. If you would like to become an El CENTRO member, contact Fabiola Bawden at fbawden_elcentro@yahoo.com, Marian Mendez at mmendez_elcentro@yahoo.com, or for more information about the policies, go to El CENTRO’s website at www.elcentronm.org. In addition, look for El CENTRO on local Spanish speaking media and listen to us on the airwaves of Radio Lobo in mid-April.

Jessica Rodriguez, community organizer and a DACAmented youth leader with El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos stressed the profound integration of immigrant communities into the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Albuquerque, “We are proud New Mexicans. We are Albuquerque’s mothers, taxpayers, classmates, the workers who clean your homes, who take care of your parents and children, who build New Mexico’s homes and office buildings and work in the service industries. We are all New Mexico and our communities are here to stay.”