

Your Faith WORKS



Newsletter of Interfaith Worker Justice

Winter 2015

A Call to Fast from Fast Food Nourish your soul with prayer, solidarity and love

Fasting is one of the most transformative acts of faithful sacrifice embraced by different religions. And although forms and periods of fasting may vary, it is always rooted in a desire to grow spiritually and be closer to God.

Throughout history and across cultures, fasting has also been used as a powerful expression of solidarity and nonviolent action.

This month, people of faith and goodwill pledged to *Fast from Fast Food* for 40 days in solidarity with the four million fast food workers who have been pushed to the margins of the economy by poverty wages.

Across the country, fast food workers are sticking together to call for \$15 an hour and the right to organize a union. Our faith and values compel us to join in the struggle to end historic inequality and ensure dignity and respect for all workers. *Fast from Fast Food* began on Ash

Wednesday (Feb. 18), the start of the Christian season of Lent, which is a 40-day period of prayer, fasting and penance. It is also a time of almsgiving and solidarity, particularly with those who have the least.

Will you *Fast from Fast Food*?

As people of faith, we believe it is a matter of justice that any person who works is paid a wage sufficient enough to afford the basic necessities of life. Injustice flourishes when those who wield economic power push the wage floor down to levels where growing numbers of working families cannot afford housing, food or transportation.

By pledging to *Fast from Fast Food* you are making a conscious choice to stand with fast food workers, pray for them, and raise awareness about the low wages and working conditions that keep them and their families in poverty. Here's what you can do:

- Fast from fast food for 40 days
- Pray for workers, that they be shrouded with courage and strength in their struggle for justice.
- Learn about the issues, educate others and invite them to *Fast from Fast Food* with you.
- Participate in actions supporting fast food workers and commit to join the national day of action on April 15.

As IWJ Board Member Dr. Jerry Taylor puts it: *Fasting opens up a pathway to a spiritual energy that has been known to shake prisons and swing open locked doors.*

It's time "to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6). Pledge to *Fast From Fast Food* at bit.ly/fastfoodfast.

FAST FROM FAST FOOD



I have been working for 12 years at Burger King. At \$8 an hour it's not enough to support my family, pay

my rent, and cover my bills. I am standing up for better wages!

-Carmela Palacios (Member of Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (www.ctul.net), an IWJ-affiliated worker center.



Top: Union Labor Life Insurance Co. represented by President & CEO, Ed Smith and Executive Assistant and IWJ board member Colleen Kilbride. Right: (L-R) SEIU International President Mary Kay Henry, our very own Kim, former IWJ board member Roz Pelles



Transitioning, Not Retiring

So many people have asked me "Why? Why are you leaving IWJ and what are you going to do?"

I'm leaving because I love IWJ. I love our work and mission and want it to survive and thrive for the long haul. I've always believed that founders shouldn't stay around too long, because we bring our weirdnesses as well as our gifts. Watching my husband Stephen's organization struggle after he died made me want to help with a smooth transition. Indeed, we "never know the day nor the hour," so I wanted to transition while I could help it. Never has the IWJ staff and board been more awesome.

This is a crescendo moment. In music, a crescendo is a symbol for increasing in volume. You get louder, stronger, more powerful. This is a crescendo moment for me and IWJ.

I am not retiring. I'm too young ☺, I have two kids in college and there is still so much work to do. I'll be officially on staff with IWJ for part of this year, writing a book with Marien Casillas Pabellon on workers centers and helping introduce many of you to Rudy. Then, I will be looking for new ways to amplify my advocacy for justice and fairness for workers. I will always remain connected to IWJ and its work – my life's passion. God is not finished with me yet. I'm open to God's leading and colleagues' ideas on how I can best serve the movement next.

IWJ is truly in a crescendo moment. We are doing fabulous work raising the minimum wage, organizing *Fast from Fast Food*, supporting Walmart workers and challenging wage theft locally and nationally. This is a time to amplify faith and worker voices. Our new Executive Director, Rudy López, is just the person to lead the work. Rudy's passion for justice is rooted in his faith. Rudy brings experience, smarts and vision. And, movements for social change are led by young people. Rudy is younger than me (I hate to admit it). Oh yes, it is a crescendo moment for IWJ.

Thank you for the privilege of serving IWJ these last 18 years.

Interfaith
Worker Justice

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Faith Works is produced by IWJ's Communications Department. For questions, corrections and story suggestions contact Communications Director, Cathy Junia, at cjunia@iwj.org or call 773-728-8400 x40.

Stay Updated – Scan the code below or sign up here <http://bit.ly/iwjupdates>



HELP: Walmart is Punishing Workers!

The work of justice will be peace (Isaiah 32:17) – but it will not always be easy.

Over the last couple of years, OUR Walmart members' bravery, dedication and action have led to reformed policies for pregnant workers, more transparent scheduling, a raise for Walmart's lowest paid workers and

improved working conditions across the nation.

Walmart workers have not only made gains on the job, they've also inspired members of their faith and local communities to join them in courageous action. Last Black Friday, thousands showed up at more than 1,600 Walmart stores to join actions, prayer vigils and stand in solidarity with striking workers.

We recently received reports

that a number of OUR Walmart members were being disciplined or fired for taking action on Black Friday.

Kiana is one of those workers. She was fired for demanding nothing more than what she rightfully deserved: wages that would allow her and her son to live in dignity.

Through prayerful action, you showed your solidarity with Kiana and other Walmart workers last Black Friday, and we urge you to stand with them again now.

No one should be punished for simply standing up for their rights and demanding a living wage that would allow them to support their family and contribute to their local communities.

Please visit www.iwj.org to find out what you and your congregation can do to support Walmart workers.



Photos courtesy of OUR Walmart



Above: Kiana Howard, left, participated in a strike against Walmart on Black Friday. She was fired a few weeks later. Left: After weeks of actions and associates speaking out in Pico Rivera, CA. Home Office sent someone to speak to the associates in the store. When they heard the stories of disrespect and intimidation that were occurring, Walmart decided to replace the store manager.

Living Wage Certification Program Launches in Two New Cities!

Remember that *Living Wage Certification Program Toolkit* that IWJ produced in collaboration with the Tompkins County Worker Center in Ithaca, NY and Just Economics in Asheville, NC?

Well, thanks to the support of donors like you, we were able to get the toolkit into more people's hands...and guess what? IWJ affiliates and other local faith-based and consumer advocate groups have since launched several Living Wage Certification programs around the country.

The *Coalition for Economic Justice* in Buffalo, NY and *Thrive! Living Wage Coalition* in Durango, CO launched Living Wage Certification programs that recognize and support ethical employers that pay living wages (or at least significantly above the minimum wages) plus health care and treat workers fairly.

With a range of employers from various sectors, both programs are situated not only to lift up ethical employers but also to work with employers to raise standards for workers in their towns. Great work to both organizations!

Want to bring the program to your city? Contact Janel Bailey (jbailey@iwj.org) for questions and more information. To download a toolkit, visit <http://www.iwj.org/network/ethical-business-leaders>.



News From Your Growing Network

IWJ's affiliated Interfaith Groups and Worker Centers have been busy lifting up standards for working people and stopping wage theft in their local communities.

Last November, 13 affiliate groups joined IWJ advocates for a National Day of Action Against Wage Theft. From Los Angeles to New Jersey, affiliates and their members brought their call to end wage theft directly to dishonest business owners and local government officials. Additionally, they reached out to U.S. Labor Secretary Tom Perez, urging his support for a *Paystubs for All* regulation which could help make workers less vulnerable to wage theft. Also last year, Brooklyn-based worker center, Worker Justice Project, released *Stand Up to Clean Up*, an illustrated know-your-rights guide for domestic workers. The center's members and staff have been using the guide to reach out to domestic cleaning laborers in the area.

Meanwhile, over in the Twin Cities, Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha is working with the city's retail janitors to improve standards and conditions in the retail cleaning industry. Worker-leaders are meeting with cleaning agencies and retail corporations around the Twin Cities to adopt fair and safe policies for staff who clean big-box stores. Because of supporters like you, we are to build and support the amazing work of our affiliate network. Join us in welcoming our newest addition to our growing network of interfaith affiliates, the Rochester Chapter of Interfaith Worker Justice. The group started as a working group looking to spearhead a living wage certification program in Rochester, Minn., but are now fully affiliated.

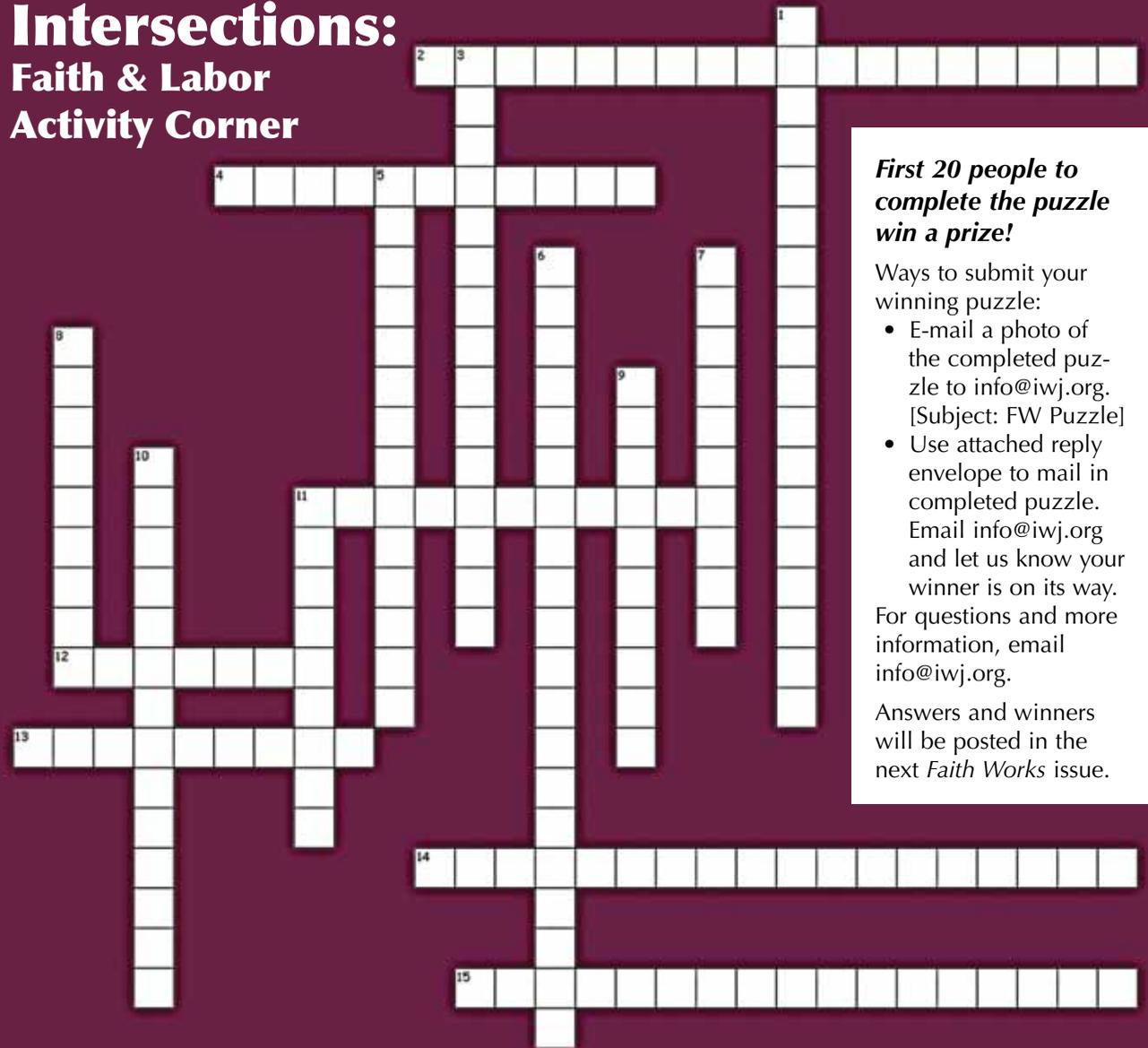
Across

2. Appointed by American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers as the organization's first female general organizer.
4. U.S. President that signed the Family and Medical Leave Act, requiring employers to grant up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for a family or medical emergency.
11. In 1910, Presbyterian Minister Charles Stelzle established the Labor Temple in this city.
12. In 1919, there was a shipyard strike of 32,000 workers in this city.
13. In 1784, this Christian denomination published a declaration that slavery was "contrary to the golden laws of God." (Though suspended a year later, it is credited with having sparked some slave owners to free their slaves as a declaration of religious conviction.)
14. Credited with saying: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."
15. U.S. President who signed a law creating the Department of Commerce and Labor.

Down

1. This was established in April of 1989 to remember all workers killed or injured on the job.
3. He led the Pullman strikes in the early '20s.
5. Newspaper started in the 1930s in order to raise awareness of the social justice teachings of the Catholic church.
6. First daily labor paper
7. The American Postal Workers Union established this on February 27, 1979 to protest the firing of over 200 postal workers during a 1978 contract dispute.
8. Founder of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)
9. Workers Martin Luther King, Jr. was helping when he was assassinated.
10. This man, often referred to as "Big Bill", was a labor leader and the co-founder of the Industrial Workers of the World.
11. In 1913, 25,000 immigrant textile workers went on strike against silk factories in this state.

Intersections: Faith & Labor Activity Corner



First 20 people to complete the puzzle win a prize!

Ways to submit your winning puzzle:

- E-mail a photo of the completed puzzle to info@iwj.org. [Subject: FW Puzzle]
- Use attached reply envelope to mail in completed puzzle. Email info@iwj.org and let us know your winner is on its way.

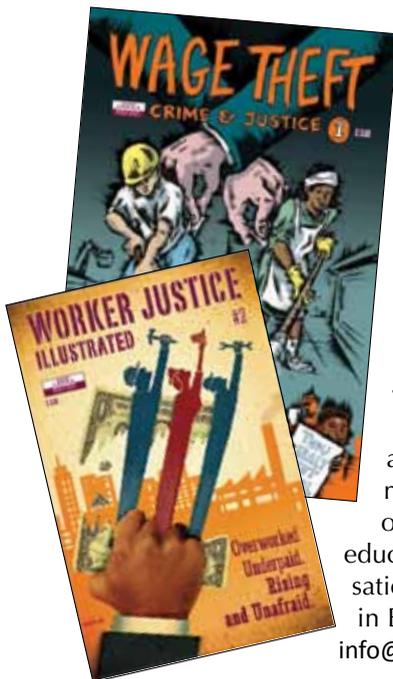
For questions and more information, email info@iwj.org.

Answers and winners will be posted in the next *Faith Works* issue.

COMIC-CONgregation

Ann Zerkel is an IWJ supporter from Iowa City and is an active member of the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa, an IWJ affiliate. Last October, she attended a conference where she saw Kim Bobo speak. It was there that she picked up a copy of the *Wage Theft* comic book. She loved it so much that she ordered copies of the comic book and used it as a tool to lead an economic justice workshop at her congregation.

Ann's congregation is one of a few covenanted economic justice congregations in the country. This year, they are focusing on two key issues: fair wages and full-time employment for all workers. Referring to the comic that explains how some restaurant owners steal tips from workers, one member said, "The comic book makes it real." Ann's workshop helped her congregation to be mindful of the businesses they support and has even helped spark conversations on wage theft with restaurant staff.



Ann's faith plays an important role in her commitment to worker justice. Ann said, "God wants every individual to live well – to have a fulfilling life. And the only way that can happen is to change the economic system so that all persons have an opportunity to work and have a living wage."

The *Wage Theft* comic book and *Worker Justice Illustrated* were made possible by IWJ donors in order to reach out to workers and educate individuals. Join the conversation! Order Vol. 1 & 2 (available in English and Spanish) by emailing info@iwj.org or visiting www.iwj.org.

Current \$152,517 Target \$1,000,000

LEAP of Faith Fund

Thank you so much to everyone who took the LEAP of Faith with us. In two months, we raised about 15 percent of our target goal. We're very happy AND grateful! But we also recognize that we have a long way to go. Will you support the LEAP of Faith? Can you pass along this link to family and friends: <http://bit.ly/leapoffaith2015>

Pro-Bono: It's "Paid back" Time!

Thanks to the support of generous individual donors, the Dr. Scholl Foundation and the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, IWJ's Wage Theft Legal Clinic has helped workers recover more than \$22,000 in unpaid wages. At the clinic, IWJ staff and volunteers provide clients with valuable legal advice about their rights, and what legal recourse might be available to them. The clinic has helped individuals recover claims ranging from \$100 to \$10,000. More recently, clinic volunteers assisted a man who was not paid overtime while working 60 to 70 hours a week for more than four years. After working with the IL Department of Labor and his employer he was able to receive the \$7,100 he was owed in unpaid overtime.

If you are a victim of wage theft, please visit the Wage Theft Clinic at 19 W. Jackson Blvd. (John Marshall Law School) on Mondays, from 5-8 p.m. You can also call the Wage Theft Hotline at (773) 998-1320. IWJ is partnering with local groups to bring the clinic to your community. Please check www.iwj.org for updates. To learn more about the Wage Theft Legal Clinic e-mail Julian Medrano at jmedrano@iwj.org.



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A New Day at IWJ

IWJ staff and board members are proud to introduce our new Executive Director, Rudy López. A devoted Catholic, long-time organizer and advocate for social justice, Rudy was also recently named one of 15 faith leaders to watch this year. He sees his work at IWJ as living out his life's calling, and we are proud to welcome him to the growing IWJ family.



"There is wonderful energy and spirit that has made me feel very welcomed. I am very enthusiastic about the work we are doing, the great staff, and the possibilities ahead." - Rudy

For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

— Jeremiah 29:11

IWJ Affiliate Network

For detailed contact information, please visit www.iwj.org.

Interfaith Groups

Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Little Rock, AR
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)—California – Los Angeles, CA
CLUE—LA – Los Angeles, CA
East Bay Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy – Oakland, CA
Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice in San Diego – San Diego, CA
Interfaith Council on Economics and Justice – San Jose, CA
IWJ-Colorado/FRESC for Good Jobs and Strong Communities – Denver, CO
Connecticut Center for a New Economy – New Haven – New Haven, CT
Connecticut Center for a New Economy – Hartford – Hartford, CT
D.C. Jobs with Justice—Interfaith Worker Justice of Greater Washington – Washington, DC
Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida – Immokalee, FL
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice – Miami, FL
DuPage Interfaith Worker Justice – Naperville, IL
Community, Faith and Labor Coalition – Indianapolis, IN

Interfaith Worker Justice of Kansas – Wichita, KS
Interfaith Worker Justice—NOLA – New Orleans, LA
Interfaith Worker Justice Southern Maine – Portland, ME
IWJ of Maryland – Baltimore, MD
Massachusetts Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Boston, MA
The Micah Center – Grand Rapids, MI
Interfaith Worker Justice—New Mexico – Santa Fe, NM
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition – New York, NY
Labor-Religion Coalition – Latham, NY
Greater Binghamton Labor-Religion Coalition – Vestal, NY
Beloved Community Center – Greensboro, NC
Cincinnati Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice – Cincinnati, OH
Greater Columbus Jobs with Justice – Columbus, OH
Central Oklahoma Community Forum – Oklahoma City, OK
Religious Outreach Committee/Portland Jobs with Justice – Portland, OR
Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice – Eugene, OR

Labor-Religion Coalition of Western Pennsylvania – Pittsburgh, PA
Philadelphia Area Jobs with Justice – Philadelphia, PA
Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee – Knoxville, TN
O.U.R. Vanderbilt – Nashville, TN
Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin – Madison, WI

Worker Centers

Winning our Wages Worker Center – Birmingham, AL
Arizona Worker Rights Center – Phoenix, AZ
Southside Workers Center – Tucson, AZ
Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center – Springdale, AR
Pilipino Workers Center – Los Angeles, CA
Young Workers United – San Francisco, CA
Economic Justice Coalition – Athens, GA
Workers Center for Racial Justice – Chicago, IL
Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa – Iowa City, IA
Food AND Medicine/Eastern Maine Worker Center – Brewer, ME
Southern Maine Workers' Center – Portland, ME
MassCOSH – Dorchester, MA
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha – Minneapolis, MN
New Labor – New Brunswick, NJ

Damayan Migrant Workers Center – New York, NY
Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC) of New York – New York, NY
Tompkins County Workers' Center – Ithaca, NY
Workers' Center of Central New York – Syracuse, NY
Western North Carolina Workers' Center – Marion, NC
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center – Cincinnati, OH
Workers' Interfaith Network – Memphis, TN
Workers' Dignity Project – Nashville, TN
Workers' Defense Project/Proyecto Defensa Laboral – Austin, TX
Fe Y Justicia Worker Center (formerly Houston Interfaith Worker Justice Center) – Houston, TX
Community to Community Development – Bellingham, WA
Madison Workers' Rights Center – Madison, WI
Voces de la Frontera – Milwaukee, WI

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