

do this? First they banned us from the top five universities here in the State of Georgia, no matter how qualified we are to attend those institutions. And then they criminalized our very own existence and livelihood through HB 87. Well, I'm here to tell the State of Georgia that I'm not going down without a fight, that I'm here to fight for my brothers and sisters.

I'm here to tell the State of Georgia that I refuse to become a second-class citizen or anything below that. I want to tell the State of Georgia that I refuse to let anyone—anyone—become a second-class citizen or anything below that.

I will put up resistance as long as there is blood pumping through my veins.

And I'm also here to ask you to join me and my undocumented brothers and sisters in the fight of our lives. We need to fight back. We need to organize through the struggles that we all share as part of the working class. And together we can beat HB 87, overturn the ban, and win social and educational equality for all.

I would like to wrap this up with a quote from one of my favorite people—you guys might know him—Malcolm X. I speak from a personal standpoint, but I'm pretty sure that I also speak for many of my undocumented brothers and sisters. To the State of Georgia, and I quote, "We declare our right on this earth to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary."

My name is Gustavo Madrigal. I am undocumented, unafraid, and unashamed.

Thank you very much.



Barack Obama ran for president in 2008 with promises to reform U.S. immigration law. By the middle of his second term, he had deported more than two million undocumented people, more than any president in U.S. history. Roberto Meneses Marquez is the president of Day Laborers United (Jornaleros Unidos), a group working for the rights of workers in the precarious day labor industry, many of them undocumented.

## Roberto Meneses Marquez, "A Day Laborer" (April 30, 2013)<sup>6</sup>

I am an undocumented day laborer in Queens who has worked in this country for almost twenty years. I do hard, dangerous jobs on construction sites such as demolition or carrying out the trash, when I can get any work at all. I have known many men who have been killed in workplace accidents or who have become gravely ill from breathing in dust due to a lack of adequate protective equipment.

We deserve the chance to become full members of the society we contribute to every day. For the past decade, I have heard much in the media about a possible immigration reform law. But, I have learned not to believe it.

In the early 2000s, there was talk of the United States and Mexico reaching a comprehensive deal to legalize all undocumented immigrants in return for a free trade deal that would allow private investment in Pemex, Mexico's state-owned oil company. Those talks fell apart after September 11.

During his 2004 re-election campaign, President George W. Bush once again raised hopes of immigration reform to woo the Latino vote, but it was an empty promise. In 2006, we went out into the streets by the millions, and our demands continued to be ignored.

President Barack Obama won the Hispanic vote in 2008 by promising that in his first 100 days as president, he would put forth comprehensive immigration reform. Once in office, he said he was too busy dealing with the economic crisis to work on immigration reform.

Today, in Obama's second term as president, we hear the same promise of humane and comprehensive immigration reform.

But, I don't see it. As far as I can tell from what is being discussed, we are being asked to accept a process toward legalization that would take ten to fifteen years. The only thing being offered is a simple guest worker permit similar to what we already have with the H-2A and H-2B visas.

Far from being a solution, work permits are instruments of exploitation for immigrant workers on both sides of the border. In immigrants' countries of origin, unscrupulous brokers collect large fees, promising to help arrange work permits, and then disappear with people's money. On this side of the border, the bosses expose the workers to long hard hours of labor in unhealthy conditions and without necessary protections. If the workers don't like it, they can lose their jobs and their work permits.

Creating a new set of work permits, without a real path to permanent residency and citizenship, will only legalize the exploitation we live under while requiring us to go to "the back of the line" and pay thousands of dollars in fines and more taxes for the privilege of being treated this way.

The Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Eight" (which includes New York Senator Chuck Schumer) may think they are fooling us. But I can't swallow this deception. And I suspect there are many others like me among the eleven million undocumented people in this country who understand what is being proposed and will have no motivation to come "out of the shadows" to participate in this process.

The distrust that I feel comes from observing two successive presidential administrations, one Republican and the other Democrat. They speak from both sides of their mouth. From one side they spew words of legalization, but on the other side they generate more anti-immigration laws, increase deportations, build detention centers and jails, and pour more investments into policing the border.

I am over forty-five years old, as are many of the people I work with in construction. And it appears increasingly likely that we will not live long enough to be legalized. This is unjust. After almost two decades in this country, there are a couple of things I have learned: Firstly, don't trust the politicians, and secondly, it will only be through our own ability to organize and collectively fight for our rights that we will see improvements in our lives.



Three years after the financial crisis of 2008 hit, on September 17, 2011, hundreds—and then thousands—of people flooded Zuccotti Park in the heart of New York City's financial district. Catalyzed by the people's movements erupting around the globe, protesters occupied the square for weeks, uniting under the slogan "We are the 99%," and inspired similar encampments throughout the country. Cleared out by massive and coordinated police mobilizations, the Occupy Wall Street movement put economic inequality squarely into the mainstream of national discourse. Canadian-American author and activist Naomi Klein delivered this speech articulating the hope and promise of the Occupy movement in Zuccotti Park on October 6, 2011.

## Naomi Klein, "Occupy Wall Street: The Most Important Thing in the World Now" (October 6, 2011)<sup>7</sup>

I love you.

And I didn't just say that so that hundreds of you would shout "I love you" back, though that is obviously a bonus feature of the human microphone. Say unto others what you would have them say unto you, only way louder.

Yesterday, one of the speakers at the labor rally said: "We found each other." That sentiment captures the beauty of what is being created here. A wide-open space (as well as an idea so big it can't be contained by any space) for all the people who want a better world to find each other. We are so grateful.

If there is one thing I know, it is that the 1 percent loves a crisis. When people are panicked and desperate and no one seems to know what to do, that is the ideal time to push through their wish list of pro-corporate policies: privatizing education and social security, slashing public services, getting rid of the last constraints on corporate power. Amidst the economic crisis, this is happening the world over.

And there is only one thing that can block this tactic, and fortunately, it's a very big thing: the 99 percent. And that 99 percent is taking to the streets from Madison to Madrid to say, "No. We will not pay for your crisis."