



# The Anti-Displacement Project

## ADP Worker Center / Casa Obrera

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## **Low Wage Workers and Immigrants Celebrate Opening of Region's Only Worker Center**

*Director of Massachusetts Department of Labor, Local, State, and National  
Labor Leaders Join in Call for Improved Enforcement of Labor Standards*

**Springfield --** 100 low wage workers together with local, state, and national labor leaders will be joined by George Noel, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Labor in celebrating the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the ADP Worker Center / Casa Obrera, **the first membership-based worker center in the region.** Low wage and immigrant workers will talk about their experiences and the ever-increasing need for worker protections. They are calling on the Patrick Administration to increase and expand enforcement of wage and hour and prevailing wage laws. The event will include a tour of the building, purchased by ADP member groups in 2003, and recognition of the volunteers who have renovated it over the past year. The event will take place on:

**Monday June 11, 2007**

**1:00 – 1:45 sharp**

**130 Union Street, Springfield**

The ADP Worker Center is an affiliate member of the Pioneer Valley Central Labor Council and a charter member of the National AFL-CIO. Sandy Felder, Northeast Regional Director of the AFL-CIO will be presenting the ADP Worker Center with its official Membership Charter. John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO said, “Through this watershed partnership, we will strengthen our ability to promote and enforce the workplace rights for all workers – union and non-union, immigrant and non-immigrant alike.”

“The ADP Worker Center is based on the recognition that everyone in our community has a shared fate and a common interest in promoting living wage work with dignity and justice,” said Caroline Murray, Director of the ADP. “We focus on servicing whole communities -- worker to worker and family to family. Organizing to improve the standards and conditions of work; educating each other on worker rights; providing language and adult basic education; running a legal clinic; going to bat for workers

who've been abused by employers and are seeking back wages or fair pay; and pushing public policy reform while placing a premium on developing leaders and ensuring that all members' voices are heard."

Working in partnership with the New England Regional Council of Carpenters, the ADP has documented massive wage and hour violations at local construction sites. Last month, members of the ADP Worker Center won over \$100,000 in back wages for carpenters who were short changed on a prevailing wage construction job at Edgewater /Pynchon Terrace Apartments. Massachusetts Attorney General, Martha Coakley, also fined the employer, Canton-based Reliable Siding, \$10,000.

While working for Reliable over the last year, Nilson Chirinos, member of the ADP Worker Center, was injured on the job when a piece of steel cut into his eye. Reliable refused to file the workers compensation papers, leaving him without the medical care urgently needed to save his eye.

"As a member of Casa Obrera, I got the money that was owed to me, I got the Worker Comp that was due to me, and just the other day I got the surgery that I needed to save my eyesight," said Nilson Chirinos. "Now I'm going to talk to more workers and let them know that Casa Obrera is here to represent all workers who need justice on the job."

"We're hitting the streets to let low-wage workers know that we now have an organization that will go after unscrupulous employers who think they can make more money by ripping off our hard working families," said Lee Hutchins, board member of the ADP. "The ADP Worker Center is going to stop the rapid decline of wages in our area."

Janice Fine, Assistant Professor at Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and author of the book, *Worker Centers, Organizing Communities at the Edge of the Dream*, will be in attendance to talk about the national impact of worker centers around the country. "Many low-wage immigrant workers in the U.S. today work in industries with few or no unions through which they can speak and act to effect improvements. Into this breach, new modes of organization have struggled to emerge. The ADP Worker Center / Casa Obrera is a nationally recognized model of a community-based mediating institution."

ADP is a membership based community organization that is well known for its work to improve the lives of low-income people and for its model of cooperative economic development. ADP has transformed 1,450 units of slum housing to tenant owned permanently affordable coops, created worker owned businesses, won over \$300,000 in restitution from employers, including Labor Ready the nation's largest temp agency; and has led a number of successful campaigns including saving funding for the Section 8 program. ADP has created business and capital holdings worth \$45 million. These community-owned assets contribute \$20 million a year in cash flow to the local economy.

