

JEWS UNITED FOR JUSTICE PRESENTS THE 8TH ANNUAL

LABOR SEDER



MARCH 31, 2009/

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TIFERETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION

WASHINGTON, DC

2009 Labor Seder Cosponsoring Organizations

American Rights at Work American Rights at Work is a leading policy and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the freedom of workers to form unions and bargain collectively. www.americanrightsatwork.org

AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps engages young people in direct work on the causes and effects of poverty in the United States. Participants in our service Corps program live out and deepen their commitments to social change and Jewish life through a year of full-time work at anti-poverty organizations in Chicago, New Orleans, New York, and Washington, DC. www.avodah.net

AVODAH-AJWS Alumni Partnership serves to inspire, engage, and support lifelong agents for social justice, rooted in and nourished by Jewish values. We are committed to establishing a culture in which social justice and service are understood, supported and acted upon as valid expressions of Jewish values. www.avodah.net and www.ajws.org

Bet Mishpachah is a DC-based congregation for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews and all who wish to participate in an inclusive, egalitarian, and mutually supportive community. www.betmish.org

Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) provides legal, housing, citizenship and other support services in the Washington metropolitan area. CARECEN strives to support Latino immigrants' transition to an integrated life in their new home and to foster civic participation, advocacy, and leadership skills so that all our clients can play a role in promoting the community's development. www.carecencdc.org

DC Employment Justice Center seeks to secure, protect, and promote workplace justice in the DC metropolitan area by providing direct legal services and engaging in broader advocacy, organizing, and community education. www.dcejc.org

DC Jobs with Justice is a coalition of labor, community, religious and student groups dedicated to building a movement for workers' rights in the District of Columbia. DC Jwj mobilizes members to take action, win concrete victories, and support worker-community struggles to build a more just society. www.dcjwj.org

DC Vote is an educational and advocacy organization dedicated to securing full voting representation in Congress for the residents of the District of Columbia. DC Vote's goal is to raise enough public awareness of the issue that the Congress passes legislation extending full congressional voting representation to residents of Washington, DC. www.dcvote.org

Foundry United Methodist Church has supported day laborers since 2005, when members began visiting the day labor site at 15th and P. Foundry's day labor outreach continues the relationship through volunteering with the Union de Trabajadores, weekly site visits, and ESL classes. www.foundryumc.org

Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO is the local affiliate of the national AFL-CIO, working with nearly 200 affiliated union locals and our community, religious, student and political allies to improve the lives of workers and their families throughout greater Washington. www.dclabor.org

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Young Leaders generate new and creative ways to help advance HIAS' longstanding mission of rescue, reunion and resettlement of immigrants and refugees. HIAS Young Leaders engage in advocacy, service, fundraising, education, and community building. www.hias.org/get-involved/young-leaders

Interfaith Worker Justice of Greater Washington is part of a network of people of faith that calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and conditions for workers, and give voice to workers, especially workers in low-wage jobs. www.iwj.org

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) is the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community representing 210 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia. The JCRC focuses on government relations, Israel advocacy, inter-group relations, and social justice. www.jccouncil.org

Jewish Labor Committee The Jewish Labor Committee provides a vital bridge between the Jewish community and the American labor movement on issues of social justice and a just peace in the Middle East. It has a long history of active programs and educational projects around the country to carry out these objectives. www.jewishlaborcommittee.org

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters, an affiliate of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, represents thousands of carpenters, millwrights, dry wall workers, floor layers, pile drivers and craftspeople who work in a wide variety of construction trades. www.WeWorkUnion.org

Moishe House DC and **Moishe House Silver Spring** are community houses run by and run for local Jews in their 20's. It is one of a network of over 20 such houses across the world, and the residents of MHSS and MHDC invite you to their programs spanning social, religious, cultural, and activist facets of Jewish life in Maryland and the District.

Tifereth Israel Congregation Tifereth Israel is an egalitarian Conservative congregation that has been a long time active participant in many social justice causes. www.tifereth-israel.org

Tikvat Israel Social Action Committee is a committee of Tikvat Israel Congregation, a friendly, participatory, and egalitarian Conservative synagogue in Rockville, MD. www.tikvatisrael.org

UFCW Local 400 is a respected and influential labor organization representing more than 40,000 workers in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, the District of Columbia and Tennessee, and a local affiliate of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. www.ufcw400.org

Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs represents both individuals and groups seeking to vindicate their civil rights. Its Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project seeks to enforce the rights of immigrants who are victims of discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, disability, age religion, sexual orientation, and other bases prohibited under federal and local laws. www.washlaw.org

Many thanks for your support of the Labor Seder and of Jews United for Justice!

A Green and Just Seder

JUFJ's Green & Just Celebrations guide helps Jewish families in our region infuse the Jewish values of equality, justice, and environmental stewardship into the purchasing choices they make for their celebrations. This year's Labor Seder is an example of such a celebration. This year, we have tried to minimize the Labor Seder's ecological impact and maximize its support of responsible labor practices in the following ways:

The Labor Seder is located close to a major bus route, and within walking distance of Metro, to encourage participants to seek alternatives to driving here.

All of our ritual foods are locally procured wherever possible, and all are organic. Purchasing foods, particularly produce, from local sources eliminates the need to transport food long distances and supports farmers and open space in our communities. Purchasing organic foods is one way to reduce our ecological "footprint" by supporting sustainable farming practices.

All of our dishes, tablecloths, and napkins are reusable. We are delighted that Tifereth Israel Congregation, our hosts, have demonstrated their commitment to sustainability by purchasing and using reusable dishes, silverware, and glassware, and that this will enable us to hold a nearly trash-free Labor Seder this year, for the first time.

Our *haggadot*/programs and other printed materials are printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

We did not undermine prevailing wages or union standards by soliciting a non-union print shop in the production of this haggadah. While we usually support a local union print shop to produce large quantities of printed materials, as a small organization with a small budget, we graciously accepted the offer of "labor donated" printing by our cosponsor the JCRC of Greater Washington.

There is Fair Trade Honest Tea on our tables tonight. Honest Tea is a DC-area company that strives to support sustainable agriculture and community building with healthy, all-natural teas. Find out more at www.honesttea.com.

To find more information about making your upcoming celebration green and just, visit www.jufj.org.

Why a Labor Seder?

We have come together at this time for many reasons. A traditional Passover seder is a festive, ritual-laden meal in which we remember the ancient Jewish story of liberation from slavery in Egypt – a great struggle for freedom and dignity. Tonight, we are also here to recognize that the struggle for human freedom did not end with that Exodus. We have come together to remember that there are those in our midst who struggle every day for dignity and freedom in their work and in their lives as a whole.

Over the centuries, thousands of different versions of the Passover *haggadah*, or “narrative,” have been written. This *haggadah* has been prepared to bring leaders and members of the organized Jewish and Labor communities together to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. As we retell it, we will examine its relationship to the struggles of working people to improve their lives, and the lives of their families, their co-workers, and their communities. The story of Passover is rich in imagery that resonates for those who care about workers’ rights: persecution, oppressive taskmasters, impossible work demands, work quotas, and finally, a struggle for freedom.

Adapted from the Jewish Labor Committee Passover Haggadah, Third Edition: Spring 2002

Why a Seder about Day Laborers in DC?

Day laborers are workers who are hired informally for jobs – often in construction, janitorial, or eviction work - for a day, or at most, a few days at a time. In DC, the majority of day laborers are Latino immigrant men, but many are homeless people, who may be African-American, Latino, or from other backgrounds; some women seek work as day laborers as well. They often perform jobs that are undesirable to other workers because they are dangerous, messy, or manual-labor-intensive.

Day laborers are often taken advantage of in hiring situations: they do dangerous work, often without proper equipment - including safety equipment - and are frequently not properly paid. While waiting for work, they have to endure harsh conditions of waiting long, undefined periods of time in all kinds of weather for uncertain outcomes. Often, a lack of English language skills hampers workers’ efforts to be clearly understood and to advocate for themselves and their fellow laborers. Immigration concerns and a perceived lack of legal recourse compound the situation.

On a national scope, as of 2004, the National Day Labor Study estimated 117,000 day laborers were seeking work, and it is likely that the actual number is higher. Most day laborers (86%) seek this type of work because other options are not available to them; they may hope to do these types of jobs permanently, or in between periods of permanent work.

Nearly two thirds of surveyed DC day laborers had not been paid on at least one occasion. Half had been paid less than they were promised, and a quarter had been paid with bad checks. Workers often have to spend more than eight hours a day on the job, sometimes more than 16. The work is inherently dangerous and even more so when workers are not provided adequate protective gear and transportation is often dangerous when workers must rely on employers’ vehicles.

These are just some of the many challenges faced by day laborers in our city. Tonight, we gather to recognize their struggle, and to take action toward a better situation for these workers in the future.

Hineh Mah Tov

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt and Cantor Marge Auerbach

Hineh mah tov umanayim
Shevet achim gam yachad.

How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to sit together.

Welcome: Rabbi Jason Kimelman-Block



Artwork by Shoshi Yaari

Table discussion: Introduce yourself. Why did you come to the Labor Seder tonight?

Opening Blessing: Shehecheyanu

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam shehecheyanu vekiyanu vehigianu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who gives us life, and keeps us strong, and has brought us to this time.

The First Cup of Wine Morning: Awakening

Blessing Over the First Cup of Wine

Fill the first cup of wine or juice.

In a traditional seder, we bless and drink four cups of wine. Tonight, the four cups will provide the structure for our seder; as we bless each cup, we will move forward in our journey from learning into action. Tonight, each of the four cups will parallel a time during a day laborer's day: morning, daytime, evening, and the future.

The first cup is the cup of awakening. A day laborer awakens each morning not knowing if he will find work that day, while we may be beginning our seder without much knowledge of day laborers' experiences, or of Passover seders, or perhaps both. Each morning, day laborers wait to see what the day will bring. We dedicate this cup of wine to awakening ourselves to greater awareness.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

Drink the first cup of wine.

Karpas/Greens

Take a piece of the green vegetable and dip it in salt water.

On the seder table, the green of the *karpas*, or green vegetable, serves as a reminder that the season of our liberation is the season of the spring harvest. As we celebrate our redemption from Egypt, we also celebrate the rebirth of the earth and the renewal of our commitment to fight for economic justice. And, as we dip the *karpas* in salt water, we are reminded that, too often, the food on our table rests on the sweat and tears of underpaid workers.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-adamah.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the Earth.

Eat the green dipped in salt water.

Yachatz: Breaking the middle matzah

Take the middle piece of the three pieces of matzah on the table and break it in half.

Matzah is a symbol of the bread of poverty. As the Talmud teaches us, just as the poor person usually has to eat bread that is broken, tonight we break this special bread to remind us of our neighbors who are today poor and hungry.

We dedicate this festive celebration to the dream and the hope of freedom, the dreams and the hopes that have filled the hearts of many from the time of our ancestors to this day. But the freedom we strive for means more than broken chains. It means liberation from all those enslavements that chain the spirit and impoverish the mind.

We now prepare to acknowledge some of what is broken in our world.

Adapted from the Jewish Labor Committee Passover Haggadah, Third Edition: Spring 2002

Wrap the larger half of the middle matzah in a napkin and set it aside.

Oh Freedom (traditional)

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt and Cantor Marge Auerbach

O Freedom. O Freedom. O Freedom over me.
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
and go home to my Lord and be free.

There'll be justice. There'll be justice. There'll be
justice over me.
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
and go home to my Lord and be free.

Peace and plenty. Peace and plenty. Peace and plenty
over me.

And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
and go home to my Lord and be free.

O Freedom. O Freedom. O Freedom over me.
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
and go home to my Lord and be free.

Four Questions: Why are day laborers different from other workers?

1. Most all other workers are entitled to be protected by an employment contract, specifying the obligations of the employer and the rights of the employee. Day laborer employment is by definition established on a temporary basis, and rarely includes formal employment contracts. These informal work arrangements leave day laborers vulnerable to labor rights violations, including not being paid the minimum wage, not being paid the full amount they are owed, and not being provided with the necessary health and safety protections.
2. Most all other workers begin their workdays inside an office of some kind or at least have some expectation of shelter from hazardous weather conditions and the use of restrooms. Day laborers generally begin their workdays on public street corners or open space lots close to gas stations, convenience stores, and home improvement businesses. They gather unprotected from heat and cold, often for hours if not hired early in the day, without any access to shelter or bathrooms.
3. Most all other workers have a general expectation that they will receive work and subsequent wages for work that they have performed each day and compensation for injuries received while on the job. Day laborers go forward each day with no expectation of employment, with no promise that more work will be available in the future. When they do find work, they are paid in cash, if at all, often without compensation for workplace injuries.
4. Most all other workers can go through their workdays without experiencing discrimination and aggressive behavior from the communities in which they work. Day laborers as a whole are often viewed as evidence of public vagrancy and illegal immigration--despite laborers including both US-born individuals and immigrants with a range of status, from full citizens to undocumented workers. Some communities have responded by reviving the enforcement of ordinances against loitering and vagrancy, and changing traffic rules to discourage drivers from stopping to pick up workers, resulting in misunderstandings or confrontations with security officers, businesses, and neighbors.

Speaker: Rabbi Sid Schwarz

Text study (*Translation from the Hebrew, JPS 1985*)

1. The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly, they made life bitter for them with harsh labor... Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let my people go..." But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you distract the people from their tasks? Get to your tasks!"...The taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh: I will not give you any straw. You must go and get the straw yourselves wherever you can find it but there shall be no decrease whatsoever in your work."

Exodus 1:13 and 5:1, 4, 10

- » *What parallels might we find between Pharaoh's punishment of the Israelites' attempts to organize and the conditions that day laborers face today?*



Graphic Design by Avrum I. Ashery

2. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God...God looked upon the Israelites and took notice of them.

Exodus 2:23, 25

3. You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it; else he will cry to the Lord against you and you will incur guilt.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

4. My money was taken from me, but I just say my prayers and hope that eventually they get caught.

A homeless day laborer discussing an experience he had with nonpayment, from "Wages Denied" by the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

- » *What role might the recurring image of cries to God play in the biblical texts?*
- » *In the case of the Israelites in Egypt, crying out (or praying) to God was a clear first step toward liberation. How might that be true for the day laborer quoted in the fourth text?*

The Second Cup of Wine Daytime: Waiting and Working

Blessing Over the Second Cup of Wine

Fill the second cup of wine or juice.

This is the cup of waiting. Feel the hard concrete beneath your feet as you stand. Squint against the sun as you look for the next truck that may be stopping for workers. You wait for the job, but also for dangers: the police, who are called to drive you off the sidewalk or the glare of a manager when you use the restroom in her store. If a job finally comes, wonder if the money you earn will be enough to pay the bills, to send something back to your family abroad. With searching eyes we drink.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

Drink the second cup of wine.

Ten Plagues: Ten Challenges Facing Day Laborers

In a traditional seder, even as we celebrate our story of liberation, our joy is reduced when we acknowledge the suffering of the Egyptians as God inflicted ten plagues upon them. Traditionally, we remove a drop of wine or juice from our glasses as each plague is named, symbolizing that our joy is not complete. At this seder, even as we celebrate our coming together to take action on this issue, we pause here to acknowledge the challenges that day laborers face every day.

We read the name of each plague aloud together. As each plague named, remove a drop of wine or juice from your glass with a finger or spoon.

1. **Insecurity:** Much of the work day laborers perform is seasonal work and without a contract, which inherently lends itself to job insecurity.
2. **Underpayment:** Because many day laborers do not enter into a contract with their employer, they risk not getting paid the full amount they are owed.
3. **Wage theft:** Many day laborers find they are not paid at all for the jobs they do.
4. **Lack of Benefits:** Day laborers do not get health benefits, retirement savings, or any other benefit to which most of us are accustomed.
5. **Injury:** Day laborers have little to no OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) protections.
6. **Cold:** Day laborers wait for work outdoors, with no warm place to be in the winter.
7. **Heat:** Similarly, they have no cool place to be in the summer.
8. **“Not In My Backyard!”:** There are few welcoming places in the city for day laborers to wait for jobs.
9. **Instability:** Day laborers work unpredictable and inconsistent hours.
10. **ICE:** Immigrant day laborers face the constant threat of being reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Speakers: Members of the Union de Trabajadores

The Passover Symbols

We now describe three of the objects on our seder plate: the *pesach*, or beet, the *matzah*, or unleavened bread, and the *maror* or bitter herb. A traditional seder plate includes a lamb's bone representing the *pesach*, but we have replaced it with a beet, which serves the same function of recalling the bright red lambs' blood that the Israelites painted on the doorposts of their homes in the Exodus story.

Point to or raise the beet:

Pesach/The Pascal Lamb

What is the significance of the *pesach*, the pascal lamb [or beet]? On the night before they were to leave Egypt, the Israelites were told to slaughter a lamb and paint their doorposts with its blood, a sign to the destroying angel not to take the first born in those homes. Today we no longer sacrifice an animal, but we do remember that night of terror and hope, a prelude to redemption. That night, as people huddled in their homes awaiting the morning, perhaps they thought: "Will the promise to punish the slave masters be fulfilled, or will morning come and leave us exposed, having marked ourselves as rebellious slaves?" The *pesach* is a reminder that freedom begins when we mark our doors, when we take the risk of speaking up and standing out. Saying no to oppression, being open and proud of our Judaism, allowing ourselves to be fully who we are, daring to believe that things will be different--this is how we mark ourselves as a people on the road to liberation.

Rabbi Toba Spitzer, A Night of Questions

Point to or raise the matzah:

Matzah/Unleavened Bread

When the Israelites heard that they were going to be allowed to leave their slavery in Egypt, they rushed to make their liberation a reality, fearful that Pharaoh's heart would harden and they would miss their chance at freedom. In their hurry, they did not have time to let their bread rise. *Matzah* represents the unleavened bread that baked on their backs, as they hastened to meet the promise of life as a free people.

Like the Israelites, day laborers are often rushing to grasp opportunity. They get to the pickup site early to get the best chance of being hired. They jump up to meet an arriving contractor, eager to get a job. They work long hours to make the most of their good fortune in being hired, unsure when this will next happen. Like the Israelites, day laborers' focus on taking steps to improve their lives doesn't leave them time for proper food preparation for themselves or their families. Some day laborers and their families may be among the 1 in 8 people in our country who suffer from hunger, 12 million of whom are children.

As a society, we fail to ensure that all who are hungry are able to eat. May this *matzah* open our eyes to the reality of domestic hunger, in which devoting energy towards monetary sustenance can come at the expense of physical sustenance. May it inspire us to work for the day when no one must choose one type of sustenance over another.

Pass the matzah around so that everyone can take a piece.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל
אֲכִילַת מַצָּה:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments and instructed us concerning the eating of *matzah*.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצֵיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the Earth.

Eat the matzah.

Point to or raise the maror/horseradish:

Maror/Bitter Herbs

The harshness of low-wage and little or no benefit work, of disempowerment, of being denied the right to organize, and of being denied the satisfaction that comes from choosing one's work and doing it well cannot be overstated. These bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness and pain of all those who face such harsh realities. We eat this *maror* with the prayer that their bitterness be turned to joy, their oppression into rights, their slavery into freedom.

Pass the maror around so that everyone can take some.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל
אֲכִילַת מָרֹר:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat maror.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments (and instructed us) concerning the eating of *maror*.

Eat the matzah and the maror together.

Zum Gali Gali (traditional, words adapted by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt)

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt and Cantor Marge Auerbach

Zum gali gali gali,
Zum gali gali.
Zum gali gali gali,
Zum gali gali.

Zum gali gali gali,
Zum gali gali.
Zum gali gali gali,
Zum gali gali.

Secher yom l'ma'an avodah
Avodah l'ma'an secher yom

Ha shalom l'ma'an ha'amin
Ha'amin l'ma'an ha shalom

*The day laborer strives to work;
work is for the day laborer.*

*Peace shall be for all the world;
all the world shall be for peace.*

The Third Cup of Wine Nighttime: Uncertainty

Blessing Over the Third Cup of Wine

Fill the third cup of wine or juice.

The third cup is the cup of uncertainty. In our lives, we all have uncertainties. We can never know what the future will bring or where life will lead us. But imagine for a moment if uncertainty was a constant. And imagine if the uncertainty was not just about the far-off future, but about your very livelihood in the here-and-now. This is the reality for so many day laborers. For even after acquiring and completing a day of work, uncertainty remains: Will your employer pay you? Will you be paid the amount that was promised? And even if you are, what will tomorrow bring? Another job and a day of work? Or a long day, standing outside, with no offers of work? As we drink this third cup of wine, let us begin to think of what we can do to lessen this uncertainty in the lives of day laborers in our community.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

Drink the third cup of wine.

Afikomen/Dessert Matzah

Earlier in the evening, we broke the middle *matzah* on the table and set aside the larger portion for the *afikomen*, the dessert *matzah*. As we discussed, *matzah* is the bread of poverty. And this broken piece of *matzah* evokes a state of poverty. A person living in poverty, a slave, a laborer without protections – doesn't know where his next meal will come from, or how long the food she has will need to last.

In a traditional Passover seder, after the meal is eaten, the leader announces that the seder cannot continue until this broken piece of *matzah*, the *afikomen*, has been found. Before we can continue, we must seek out that which is broken. We must get up from the table, from our reclining positions, and start moving. Start seeking. Start looking for a way to heal the brokenness.

Read responsively:

As it is hidden,

So must we seek.

As the system is broken,

So must we seek its repair.

As day laborers stand outside unprotected,

So must we seek appropriate shelter to house them.

As day laborers are humiliated while waiting for work,

So must we seek structures to preserve their dignity.

As day laborers are not paid their promised wages,

So must we seek the security of a worker center.

As justice eludes us,

So must we pursue it.

As it is hidden,

So must we seek.

Dayeinu: Day Laborers' Demands (traditional melody, lyrics by Joelle Novey)

In a Passover seder, we list the elements of God's liberation of the Jewish people and say that each one, alone, would have been enough – in Hebrew, *dayeinu*. We say that it would have been enough if God had taken us out of Egypt but not sustained us in the desert or led us to the land of Israel. We say it would have been enough if God had done those things but not given us *Shabbat*, a day of rest, or the *Torah*. We assert that each of these things, alone, is something to be grateful for, as steps along the way to full liberation.

In the same way, the Union de Trabajadores, a group of day laborers seeking to improve their working conditions, developed this list of demands for Washington, DC's Department of Employment Services to address the issue of wage theft. Each would be an important step along the way. But only when day laborers have all of these things can we truly say *dayeinu*: it is enough.

Dai, dayeinu (3x)
Dayeinu dayeinu!

If some bosses withheld our wages,
but workers were trained to file claims for justice ...
Dayeinu

If some bosses withheld our wages,
but DOES kept workers updated
on their pending claims for justice ... Dayeinu

If some bosses withheld our wages,
but DOES had better tools and gauges
and kept day laborers updated
on their urgent claims for justice ... Dayeinu

If some bosses withheld our wages,
but DOES gave them a fine for the ages
and tracked them down fast with better gauges
and kept day laborers updated
on backpay owed and repaid for justice Dayeinu

If day laborers organize -- "Si se puede!"
At a new worker center -- then, on pay day ...
Maybe bosses wouldn't withhold our wages
and DOES wouldn't need a fine for the ages
or to track bosses down with tools and gauges
or keep those workers all updated
Enough already with stolen wages!
Dayeinu.

Dai, dayeinu (3X)
Dayeinu dayeinu

Some explanatory notes:

At "Know-Your-Rights" trainings, groups like DC Jobs with Justice help workers gain the skills and knowledge they need to file claims with the Department of Employment Services (DOES)'s Office of Wage-Hour.

When a claim is filed, DOES should let workers' know when progress is made on their cases.

DOES' methods for conducting wage theft investigations are not always applicable to day laborers' unique work situation. DOES should make their processes more accessible to day laborers – for example, by allowing workers to file claims using their employers' license plate numbers rather than their home addresses, which many day laborers never know.

Too often, employers face no repercussions for wage theft. The DOES should pursue penalties against employers who have violated the law in order to discourage future violations.

With the help of the Department of Employment Services, wage theft can be stopped. But in the longer term, the creation of a worker center in DC would help workers fight wage theft, as well as many other challenges, even more effectively.

Day Laborers and Worker Centers Around the Country

Worker centers offer the possibility to organize newly arrived, low-wage, immigrant communities to both raise wage and safety standards as well as give workers a voice in their society. The following case studies explore the challenges and benefits of establishing a worker center for day laborers:

Case 1: In Herndon, Virginia, proponents for a worker center for day laborers argued that it was the best way to ensure workers' safety and reduce noise and littering. Opponents charged that the worker center would sink property values and that public money would be used to essentially support illegal immigration. Racial and class tensions permeated public debates. In August 2005, after five public hearings, the Herndon Town Council voted to grant Project Hope and Harmony a building permit and \$175,000 to build a day laborer center. Soon, though, a legal challenge was filed saying only documented workers had a right to use the center, and voters unseated both the Mayor and two council members who were supportive of the center. When a court upheld the rights of all residents to use the center, the newly-elected council, with the new Mayor's support, voted to close the worker center, after less than two years of operation.

Case 2: Day laborers in Portland, Oregon began their efforts to establish a worker center by discussing their own goals for a center, then began negotiations with the city and local businesses. The Portland Workers' Rights Education Project spent time educating city officials about the abuses day laborers faced, and city officials eventually became convinced that they could not control immigration, but could enforce a floor wage and decent working conditions. However, representatives of organized labor, particularly the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, were concerned that day laborers would take jobs from union members and called on the city not to fund the center. Slowly, though, things began to change. The Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, which saw the benefits of a day laborer center, served as a go-between for other local unions and the day laborers. They worked to draw connections and show local labor how a worker center could be mutually beneficial. After years of struggle, the city agreed to fund the first two years of the center.

Keeping these stories in mind as we envision creating a worker center in DC, consider:

- » *How could a worker center help the greater DC community?*
- » *What are some of the potential obstacles or barriers to a worker center in DC?*
- » *What resources can we, in this room, use to advocate for a worker center?*



Graphic Design by Avrum I. Ashery

The Fourth Cup of Wine Tomorrow: Taking Action

Blessing Over the Fourth Cup of Wine

Fill the fourth cup of wine or juice.

With this cup, we transition from learning to action. This fourth cup is the cup of the future. Day laborers do not need to live consumed with waiting and uncertainty; we can work together to make change. With hope in our hearts we drink.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

Drink the fourth cup of wine.

Elijah's Cup

It is said that Elijah the Prophet visits each home on the night of the Passover seder, as a foreshadowing of the time when he will arrive to announce the coming of the Messiah, and a healed world. Traditionally, we fill a cup of wine for Elijah to welcome him to our seder. In many traditions, the front doors of Jewish homes are also opened, to welcome the prophet into our midst.

Elijah is also a fixture in Jewish folklore, often appearing disguised as a poor traveler or beggar in need. He rewards those who help him through generosity and compassion.

Our tradition reminds us to honor all people, from family to strangers, from neighbors to wanderers. The stories of Elijah insist that our generosity and compassion, our “open doors,” must extend to all people if we hope to usher in an era of true justice.

A poor woman and her family were eating supper. It wasn't much, but it was the best meal they could manage. They raised their glasses to wish for a better future in a better world, and just then, there was a knock at the door. A traveling beggar stood outside with his hand outstretched, saying nothing.

They told him, “You are welcome here. Please join us. We don't have much to eat or drink, but what we have, we can share with you.” They shared their food and drink, and they shared stories and songs. They all stayed up late that night. Finally, the candles were burning out, and there were no more candles left to light.

“Please stay with us for the night,” they told the traveler. “Thank you for all your kindness, but I must continue on my journey,” said the traveler. As he headed out the door, he smiled warmly and said, “May the next thing you do have no end until you say “Enough!” Then he was gone.

“He will need money on his journey,” said the woman. She reached into her pocket for the only money they had, a silver coin. When she took it out she felt another coin in her pocket. She took that one out and felt another. No matter how many coins she took out, there was always one more in her pocket. She piled the table high with silver coins until they were spilling over and covering the floor.

She said, “We have all the money we will ever need.” “You are right,” said her father. “It's enough.” The moment he said the word “enough,” there were no more coins in her pocket. The magic was over. The family sat down and stared at their great fortune.

“That was no ordinary man,” said the woman. “That must have been the prophet Elijah in disguise.”

*Adapted from “Enough,” retold by Sheldon Oberman in *Solomon and the Ant and Other Jewish Folktales*, Boyds Mills Press, 2006*

Miriam's Cup

Tradition tells us that God gave Miriam, sister of Moses, a miraculous well that followed the Israelites through the desert. Her well provided water for all who were thirsty. In some communities, a cup of water is filled at the Passover seder to recall Miriam's care for the Israelites as they wandered.

We are working for the equivalent of Miriam's well in the desert: short-term, creative solutions that will sustain workers day to day. But tonight, we also look toward an era when the wandering of day laborers can end: when they can find jobs from a stationary home base without fearing that police, local businesses, or the city will require them to go elsewhere, and when temporary solutions like Miriam's well can be replaced by more permanent, grounded miracles.

Speaker: Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr., DC City Council, Ward 5

Taking Action!

Never Turning Back

Pat Humphries

Gonna keep on walking forward. Keep on walking forward.
Keep on walking forward. Never turning back. Never turning back.

Gonna keep on singing loudly...

Gonna join our hands together...

Gonna stand up for our neighbors...

Gonna keep on walking forward...

Closing: Jacob Feinspan, Jews United for Justice

Next Year as Free People!

B'shana Haba'ah B'nai Chorin!

The staff and board of Jews United for Justice would like to thank: Rabbi Jason Kimelman-Block; all of our seder speakers and participants; Adriana Sandler and the rest of the staff at Tifereth Israel Congregation; our partner, the Coalition for a Worker Center in DC; all of our seder cosponsors; and German Zepeda, Shoshi Spektor Yaari, and Avrum Ashery for the beautiful artwork in our seder materials.

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Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) leads Washington-area Jews to act on our shared Jewish values by pursuing justice and equality in our local community.

Through educational forums, programs, and campaigns, JUFJ has worked for the past ten years to build relationships and mobilize the Jewish community to demand and win meaningful change for all area residents. Our work is grounded in Jewish text as well as the Jewish experience of both prejudice and privilege, weaving together and strengthening members' progressive and Jewish identities. JUFJ enables Jews to practice and live out our sacred tradition of *tikkun olam*/repairing the world by working in solidarity with local partners for a more just and equal metropolitan community.



JUFJ envisions a healthy, fair, and safe Washington area where the rights and dignity of all residents are respected and their voices are heard, where working hard guarantees a decent living, and where everyone has access to high-quality health care and affordable housing. We believe that the only way to build such a community is for Jews to join with our neighbors to demand social change.

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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.