

OREGON LAW CENTER

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October 31, 2014

The Lowenstein Trust
c/o Charles R. Williamson
520 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 600
Portland, OR 97204

RE: Nomination for the Steve Lowenstein Trust Award 2014

Dear Trustees:

Please accept my nomination of Ignacio Paramo for this year's Steve Lowenstein Trust Award.

NAME OF NOMINEE: Ignacio Paramo
HOME ADDRESS: 3636 SE 65th Ave.
Portland, OR 97206

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Mobile: 971-570-8521
Work: 503-234-2043

I. Please describe this person's contribution to assisting the poor and underprivileged in Portland, Oregon.

For many, Ignacio Paramo is the face and heart of the Voz Worker Center on MLK Jr. Blvd in Portland, where he has been serving day laborers since it opened in 2008.

Voz Workers' Rights Education Project is a Portland-based, "worker-led organization that empowers immigrants and day laborers to gain control over their working conditions through leadership development, organizing, and community education." It was formed to address the safety and civil rights of workers, usually immigrants, who stood on street corners looking for work. Day laborers do everything from moving heavy appliances, to removing roofing or overgrown vegetation, to pouring concrete. Sometimes they are injured while working or not paid. The work usually does not last more than a few days to a week.

Voz's MLK Jr. Worker Center provides a safe, inclusive community where these workers can find work, gain job skills, and learn about worker and civil rights. Mr. Paramo has been the Director of the MLK Jr. Worker Center since it opened. He has worked tirelessly, Monday through Friday, and many weekends, to keep the Center working smoothly. He treats workers and employers with dignity and respect, and his efforts have been critical to the Center's success. At the Center he manages one staff person and 20 volunteers in the average week, while the Center handles 60 to 120

workers a day. In addition to developing employment opportunities for day laborers by signing up employers who are interested in workers, matching workers and jobs, and ensuring workers are treated fairly and paid a minimum wage of \$12 an hour, he supervises workforce development programs, such as job safety, job skills, computer skills, ESL classes, and coordinating volunteers who teach the classes. He also works with the Voz's Wage Recovery program, in conjunction with Lewis & Clark Law School, to help workers collect unpaid wages. Since many workers lack a form of identification, he writes "letters of recommendation" for workers to use to access basic services.

Because of Mr. Paramo and his co-workers, the Worker Center is a place that provides dignity and a sense of community to the people who do our most difficult and dangerous work. It is a place where day laborers can get to know each other, and encourage and support one another.

Before he became the Director of the Worker Center, Mr. Paramo worked for Voz as a community outreach worker. From about 2004 to 2008, he visited day laborers on street corners to talk about worker and civil rights, investigate unpaid wages, and even teach ESL classes. During that time he worked on a project called Observadores de Jornaleros de Oregon (Day Laborer Observers of Oregon), or "OJO," which documented police harassment of day laborers. As part of that effort he reached out to Portland city officials, police, and local businesses to create greater awareness of day labor issues.

2. Explain how you think this award could assist the nominee in carrying out his or her work.

This Award would recognize a group of people who are isolated and forced to live and work in the shadows. It would show that people care and welcome them in our community. Recently Mayor Hales acknowledged the important work of Voz when he voiced his support for Mr. Paramo's co-worker who is seeking relief from overly aggressive immigration enforcement.

This Award would be recognition of Mr. Paramo's dedication to Portland's most vulnerable workers. Mr. Paramo works with day laborers and immigrants because it is important to him and over the past ten years he has been compensated at only slightly more than the minimum hourly wage that Voz seeks for the day laborers he serves.

The Award would also be significant to Voz as an organization. It is the only worker center that serves the day labor and immigrant community in Portland. It serves a population that is often the target of anti-poor and anti-immigrant prejudices and made to feel unwelcome. It is a non-profit organization that works hard to secure funding but whose resources are extremely limited. Voz is trying to establish a permanent location for its Worker Center (10/24/2013 Oregonian article enclosed),

and it recently lost major funding when it would not back down from equal rights. (7/15/2014 Oregonian article enclosed).

3. What inspired you to nominate this person?

I have worked with Mr. Paramo on various issues over the past five years and I think he is an unsung hero. Every time I have visited the Worker Center, no matter the time of day, or weather conditions, Mr. Paramo was there - listening to day laborers, talking to employers, making sure the community space had hot coffee, and joking with volunteers, sometimes all at once.

While easy-going, Mr. Paramo clearly appreciates the seriousness of this work. When I asked him what keeps him motivated, he said he remembers the time he was at a street corner in Portland and a truck dumped a man on the sidewalk and left – the man was a day laborer who had been injured while working and instead of taking him to the hospital, the person who hired him took him back to the street corner where he had picked him up. Mr. Paramo does not think people should be treated like that.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,


David Henretty

Enclosures



Commissioner Nick Fish
City of Portland

December 3, 2014

Steve Lowenstein Trust Award *(15 min)*

Introduction by: Commissioner Nick Fish

Summary:

This is the twenty-fourth annual Steve Lowenstein Trust Award. The award was created to recognize an individual who is making an extraordinary personal effort and sacrifice to improve the quality of life for distressed and vulnerable populations in the city of Portland.

Presented by:

Michelle Harper, Steve Lowenstein Board Chair

Invited Testimony:

Ignacio Paramo, Award Recipient

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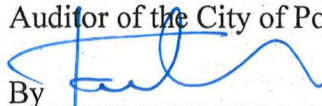
Recognize Ignacio Paramo as the recipient of the 2014 Steve Lowenstein Trust Award (Presentation introduced by Commissioner Fish)

DEC 03 2014

PLACED ON FILE

Filed NOV 26 2014

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Novick		
Hales		