



Low-wage workers leading the way to poverty's end.

For immediate release

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Inner Harbor workers to stage "Our Harbor Day" with series of street plays, neighborhood parades & protest at the Inner Harbor

(BALTIMORE) After more than a year of planning and preparation, hundreds of Baltimore's low-wage workers and community allies will tell the "people's history of the Inner Harbor" on May 1, 2010 through a series of elaborate storytelling performances to draw attention to poverty-wages and poor working conditions at Baltimore's premiere tourist and entertainment district. The day, dubbed "Our Harbor Day," will include street plays, giant puppets, neighbourhood parades, musical performances and a concluding rally and march from City Hall to the Inner Harbor.

Neighbourhood plays start at 3:00 PM on May 1, 2010 (location to be announced, call Ashley Hufnagel at 443/977-3531 for exact location). Neighborhood plays converge at City Hall at 4:15 PM, where a final act that connects the struggle faced by Inner Harbor workers with that of the Underground Railroad will be performed by low-wage workers. The play will be told with large scale puppets and concludes with a march of workers and allies to the Inner Harbor.

Our Harbor Day will draw attention to workers' demands that Inner Harbor developers, Cordish Co. and General Growth Properties (GGP), enter into legally binding agreements with the United Workers that will ensure that the economic human rights of workers are respected by the employers at the development. The "fair development" agreements would require all vendors (such as national chains Cheesecake Factory and ESPN Zone and locally owned Phillip's Seafood), pay workers a living wage, which would be enforced through leases between the developers and their vendors. Workers are also demanding funding for education and health care.

Preparations for Our Harbor Day have included more than a year of planning, including rental of a large studio and art space starting in March, a four-day Artful Activism Summit with the Backbone Campaign held in in late March, and a full-day conference on Justice Theater held on the Saturday of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In December 2009 Inner Harbor workers drove to Immokalee, Florida to meet with farmworkers there and learn how to use street plays, puppets, music and neighborhood parades for drawing attention and building community support for worker justice.

On October 25, 2008 low-wage workers declared the Inner Harbor to be a "Human Rights Zone" and demanded that workers' human rights to work with dignity, education and health care be respected. Specific demands were later announced, including that the developers mandate, through leases with their vendors, that every worker at the Inner Harbor be paid at least the state living wage, and that developers agree to fund education and health care programs for workers and their families. The United Workers has formally requested face-to-face meetings with Cordish and GGP. Neither developer has yet responded to the demands or the request to meet with the United Workers.

The United Workers is a human rights organization led by low-wage workers and was founded by homeless day laborers in 2002 at the Eutaw street shelter, an abandoned firehouse turned homeless shelter.

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