

The immigrant workers' struggle for life and dignity



IN THIS EPISODE

California has expanded the state's Medicaid program to *some* undocumented immigrant workers, *but not all*. ***Who gets coverage, and who doesn't?*** Is lack of insurance coverage the only issue immigrant workers face when it comes to their survival? ***Did the pandemic reveal that the "safety net" is full of holes?***

To find out, we spoke to **Luz Gallegos**, executive director of [TODEC Legal Center](#) in Southern California's Inland Empire. The nonprofit mobilizes immigrant communities to build political power and demand justice while advocating for their most critical needs – from improved schools and better jobs to expanding access to medical coverage and legal protections.

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WE DISCUSS

After investing in the expansion of Medi-Cal to more people, what else can be done to improve our health care?

“When we're talking about investments, we need to continue investing in our future generation of physicians, but then also continue to address the needs at the same time, having systems that really work for (the) community and [that] are really seeing a person as a human being, not just as a number sign.

“Definitely, that's why certain systems like single payer are just so important...” - **Luz Gallegos**

What about during the pandemic, when workers were ordered to stay home? Did immigrant workers get unemployment insurance?

“...They didn't have access to unemployment insurance because they were undocumented. Imagine contributing for years, for decades to an insurance trust and not having access to your hard [earned] money because it's not a benefit given....

“We would tell our workers, you need to stay home because if you're going to work, you're exposing yourself and your health....you're also exposing the rest of your companeros, the rest of the workers and the rest of our community. They continue to tell us ...‘if I don't work, my family doesn't eat’ and that is the reality...” - **Luz Gallegos**

How would the communities you serve be impacted by Medicare for All?

“That would [have] a tremendous positive impact for our community. Actually having access to quality health care, and especially not really looking at immigration status, just looking at a person because, you know, making sure that we're addressing everybody's needs because, you know, we have to take care of our health.” – **Luz Gallegos**

Helpful Links

[Training Occupational Development Educating Communities \(TODEC\)](#)

[California Opens Medi-Cal to Older Unauthorized Immigrants](#), *California Healthline*

[California is expanding Medi-Cal — but hundreds of thousands of immigrants will still be left behind](#), *Cal-Matters*

[What is the Public Charge rule?](#), *ImmigrationHelp.org*

[DHS Proposes Fair & Humane Public Charge Rule](#), *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

[Redesigning the Health System: Increasing Access to Primary Care Providers](#), *Let's Get Healthy California*

[California's Physicians, Medical Professionals Shortage Addressed in New Bill](#), *Physicians News Network, Los Angeles County Medical Association*

Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

Luz Gallegos Biography

Luz Gallegos was born and raised in California's [Inland Empire](#).

She began, "en [la causa](#), el movimiento" as a very young child with the guidance of her parents, advocating for social justice, organizing, and marching alongside great leaders like [Bert Corona](#), [Soledad "Chole" Alatorre](#), and [Cesar E. Chavez](#).

Luz is a natural leader. Her organizing and advocating experience came first hand throughout her childhood. At a very young age she developed a community consciousness and commitment that has become part of her life.

She has led hundreds of community programs and campaigns dealing with an array of issues, immigrant rights, and civic engagement. Luz has mentored hundreds of youth and has motivated them to continue with their education while not forgetting their roots.

She continues to lead the TODEC Legal Center to give continuity to her family's community commitment and legacy.

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