

Wei Chen

Wei Chen is Project Director at the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA), the first contemporary workers' center bringing together workers across trades to fight for change in the workplace as well as in the community-at-large. Started in 1979 with mostly male, restaurant workers, CSWA saw the limit of single-trade, "employee" approach and rapidly expanded to include garment and construction workers, caregivers, disabled workers, retirees, and youth. Today CSWA has a membership of over 1,300 workers from various trades and ages, employed and non-employed, injured and non-injured, unionized and non-unionized, documented and undocumented and a leadership composed primarily of women.; Recognizing workers as agents for change rather than treating them as victims, CSWA confronts the systemic causes of poverty and inequity through several community-based programs and organizing campaigns such as workplace health and safety, labor rights clinic, anti-displacement, and 9/11 emergency response program. Ms. Chen immigrated to the US in 1999 and worked for the Institute for Women and Work at Cornell University. After volunteering with CSWA for a few years, Ms. Chen was awarded the New Voices fellowship in 2002 and joined CSWA as an organizer, spearheading a Labor Rights Clinic in the Brooklyn Workers' Center and Workers' Health & Safety Campaign.