

Yanira Merino

Yanira Merino immigrated to the United States from El Salvador in 1991. At that time Yanira joined many other immigrant workers in their exodus to the City of Los Angeles, California, as for many others, her first job was a typical low wages, no benefits and nonunion job at a shrimp processing plant where most of the workers were single women and immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

Coming from El Salvador where oppression and repression had been a daily experience for her, but had also given her first hand knowledge on how to fight back. With this background it did not take long for Yanira to realize the level of exploitation workers were working under and in September 1994 decided to confront management along with other coworkers by starting to an organizing effort to go union. Their effort proved right when in November 14, 1995, only two months later, the workers voted in the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) with a blast majority and after only four months of negotiations they saw the rewards of their organizing effort by getting a contract that insured better wages, conditions and benefits, but most important a voice at work that insured their rights as workers.

With her proven commitment to organizing workers, in particularly minority and recent immigrant workers, Yanira was hired as an organizer by LIUNA.

Presently Yanira works as an assistant to the president of the union where she contributes to LIUNA's commitment to reform immigration laws, affirmative action and organizing and keeping the Latino issues on top of the political agenda of the union.