Voces de la Frontera

César Chávez Acción y Compromiso Human and Civil Rights Award

A voiceless people can be defeated... a people raising their voices in unity can never be defeated. Voces de la Frontera led by their fearless Executive Director, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, is helping the people raise their voice.

Voces de la Frontera (Voices From The Border) is a community based coalition of low wage workers, immigrant youth, and labor activists, joining forces towards the common goal of safeguarding and expanding worker’s rights, especially as they impact the most marginalized of communities.

Neumann-Ortiz’s mission for Voces is to create an environment where all people have access to quality education, safe employment with fair compensation, harassment-free workplaces, and where immigrants can cross borders with dignity and legality, on a pathway to full citizenship.

Founded at a Milwaukee, Wisconsin worker’s center, Voces de la Frontera was inspired by immigrants employed along the U.S.-Mexico border, and their need to be aware of their workplace rights while simultaneously striving to dismantle legislation that unfairly affected them. The organization’s founders recognized the humanity in those workers that were simply trying to make an honest, decent living wage, yet were confronted with issues ranging from not being able to drive to work for fear of being pulled over and deported, reports to ICE officials, family separation, and more. Those that felt and continue to feel that they have no recourse have found “sanctuary” in Voces.

Neumann-Ortiz’s approach with Voces is three-pronged: to educate young people on how they can expand their educational opportunities, and not fall prey to the roadblocks faced by immigrant communities; inspire them to be activists and advocates for themselves via school walkouts and protests, side by side with educators; while also engaging the labor movement to apply pressure to create immigration reform. This intersection of ideas has made Voces a force to be reckoned with.

Voces “Day Without Latinxs and Immigrants” rally illustrated the importance of these communities’ contribution to the fabric of the nation, while also helping to defeat two statewide anti-sanctuary bills. Their youth program, YES (Youth Empowered in the Struggle), is a multicultural school-based initiative that demonstrates the history and power of student activism to affect change while also creating a sense of accomplishment and personal fulfillment in our youth. Through YES, Voces is helping to produce America’s future leaders.

Mobilization, organization, and empowerment - these are the skills, and goals, that Voces de la Frontera are providing for young people from all walks of life. Continuing the storied legacy of this award’s namesake, Cesar Chavez and his “partner in pride” Delores Huerta, Voces is insuring that the intersection of civil rights, workers’ rights, and immigrant rights will always have a voice and will never be defeated.