

# Latinas Reaching the Green Dream



Luz



Three years ago Luz questioned whether she would ever find a workplace that respected her rights. Luz was working for a local hotel and struggling, together with her co-workers, for decent wages and humane workloads.

“I’ve always looked for a workplace where one’s *esfuerzos* [efforts] are recognized,” said Luz, who fought against unfair labor conditions for more than two years before hotel managers agreed to pay decent wages and reduce each woman’s workload from 17 suites per day to 9-10 suites — but not before Luz was fired.

Luckily for Luz, local community groups referred her to Natural Home Cleaning (NHC), the WAGES co-op affiliate serving the East Bay.

“I’ve been very fortunate to have found a place I can call my own. With the help of WAGES’ training and support, we *socias* [members] have our own place, and from here we can only grow. From here we can help other women in our community and the community at large,” said Luz.

Today Luz earns \$12.00 an hour plus

profit-sharing, a far cry from the \$8.00 an hour she earned as a hotel worker under harsh working conditions. She is proud of her work, of the products she uses, and of her ability to help her youngest daughter through college.

“Being an owner of such a great organization delights me,” said Luz. “I am proud of it all — One day I hope to retire and live a quiet life, but for now I’m grateful to have a stable, full-time job that allows me to help my children pursue higher education. It’s my inheritance gift to them, one they can always keep,” she added.

Luz also finds time to give back to WAGES, NHC, and her community. In June, as part of WAGES’ Peer Leadership Program, Luz led two hours of team building activities for seven new NHC co-op member hopefuls.



Salary before NHC \$8/hr

Salary Today: \$12/hr

Benefits Before NHC: 0

Benefits Today: Health & Dental Care paid for by the co-op

Clockwise from Top Left: 1. Luz; 2. NHC members group photo; 3. Josué Revolorio, WAGES’ staff member; Luz, NHC member-owner, Teresa Perez, WAGES’ trainer; and Ivette Meléndez, WAGES’ staff member take part in a May PLP training.

Photos: Hilary Abell, Irene Florez