

Unions: The Voice of Labor

What would you say to someone who says the following, “Unions were important at one time, but we don’t need them anymore.”? I would respond by saying that unions are the reason for the establishment of labor protections and rights workers are afforded today. Unions have shaped the way Americans live and work, and continue to fight for the achievement of the American Dream for millions of workers. They have already made one dream possible, that of my father, Ivan Guznay. Not only are unions able to provide job opportunities, with labor protections and rights, but unions are vital in order to help relieve America of its political and economic crises. Specifically, the auto industry, public education, and politics are areas in which unions could play a pivotal role and have tremendous positive impact. On a personal level, Local 272, my father’s union, has been able to offer my sister and I the chance to receive an education, live formidably, and for my entire family, offered health protection. Local 272, and other unions, have improved working and living standards for American families and communities across the nation.

The individual who has benefited the most from the founding of unions is the worker. Unions arose after the civil war in response to a new, modern industrial economy. A labor union is defined as an organized association of workers, often in a trade or profession, formed to protect and further their rights and interests. Unions have secured legislated labor protections and rights, such as safety and health, overtime, and family and medical leave. Specific impacts of unions have been upon wages, fringe benefits, and pay inequality. Also, due to the fact that unionized workers are more informed, they are more likely to benefit from social insurance programs such as unemployment insurance and workers compensation. In other words, unions serve as an intermediary institution that provides a necessary complement to legislated benefits and protections. Other major roles of unions are the enablement of due process in the workplace and the facilitation of a strong, democratic voice in the workplace. The economy has found unions to be a positive force, improving the performance of firms and contributing to economic growth. Unions provide America’s working families with the representation, collective power, pride in work, and fair treatment in the workplace that they deserve.

My father, Ivan Guznay, has been a Teamster member of Local 272 for the past 23 years. In comparison to his wage the first year when he became a member of Local 272, it has increased fairly. As a proud Hispanic, he has never had any problems with benefits, discrimination, or experienced any infringement upon his rights. In addition, my father is able to provide his family and himself with health insurance, through his membership of Local 272. I cannot speak for my father, but I believe that my family, including him, holds much gratitude for Local 272. Finally, if it were not for unions, I would never have been given the scholarship opportunity through the James R. Hoffa Memorial Fund, which would serve as an aid in my pursuit of a dual-college degree, in Pre-Law and Business Administration. My simple answer would be that America still needs unions today to speak for all workers, to be the voice of labor.

http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers_bp143/

<http://www.unionplus.org/about/labor-unions/today>

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/labor%20union>