

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 16: Robert

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Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

**Ever been to a baseball game at Camden Yards? Did you use the facilities there or leave trash under your seat?**

**If so, your life has touched been touched by the unseen, the unnoticed, one of the 150 people that are hired on a temporary basis each time the orioles have a home game.**

**Camden Yards is the biggest day laborer employer in the city.**

**But not the only one. Companies throughout Baltimore are increasingly filling their staffing needs with temporary workers instead of full time workers.**

**And 39 year old Robert is pretty sure that this has something to do with what he sees as terrible working conditions at Camden Yards and elsewhere.**

We talking, we make close to peanuts. You work one day at the stadium you are getting 35 dollars. It's bad down there, real bad. Case in example, last year I was working down Camden yards. And there was a real nasty accident in the bathroom, and I was told I had to go in there and clean it, and I looked at the supervisors and said, I am not going to go in there and clean it. I have nothing to clean it with. You gave me a broom and a dustpan and told me to go clean up...you want me to clean up feces with a broom and a dustpan no proper gloves, not even stocked! That's unsanitary. Because we aren't supposed to be doing that, they have trained personal who are supposed to come and clean that stuff up. He actually threatened to send me home, he said, you either clean it up or you are going home. And these are the things you have to go through. It is destroying my self esteem. But it is not really for me that I continue to allow myself to be bombarded with things like this. It is for my family. I have four children. I am doing the best I can. What we try to do is, me and my finance both of us work for temp agencies. We try to keep focused, try to move it day by day, keep on moving, keep on moving, keep on pushing, its all we can do, take one day at a time. And hopefully, people will hear what is going on down at the temp agencies, and we will get a living wage increase. Maybe that will help us.

**Robert is part of a group called the United Workers Association. They are in talks with the Maryland Stadium Authority to form a worker's co-operative and are hoping to get a living wage and better working conditions.. Robert is hopeful that changes at Camden Yards will cause changes in all the companies that hire temporary workers.**

You have to start somewhere. We need some regulation on the day labor places, period. We getting to a point now where day laborer is about taking over. Every job they is using cheap labor to do work that contractors would bill them a whole lot more money then they are. Someone has to take responsibility, someone has to be held accountable. You have to start somewhere. And if we can make the administration look at it in a whole... And we use this as an example, Camden yards is an example, these are the things. And from there, it is like a tree, it is going to branch, and effect every labor company, it will effect them. Sooner or later everyone is going to take notice of these people being exploited. And that is what we are hoping for. That's what we are hoping for.

**Next Tuesday at one o'clock on the Marc Steiner show we'll be talking with Maryland's new secretary of Labor Licensing and Regulation. We'll raise these issues with him-don't miss it.**

**Music: Ronnie Neuman, *Take me out to the Ballgame***



a 360° view of the people and stories behind the issues

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### **The Stories of Working People In Our Community**

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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