

Personal and Collective Work Safety Practices

Host Organization:



LOS ANGELES
BLACK WORKER
CENTER

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Objectives

We hoped to create:

- A resource guide that provides information on health and safety practices geared towards Black workers navigating their workplace

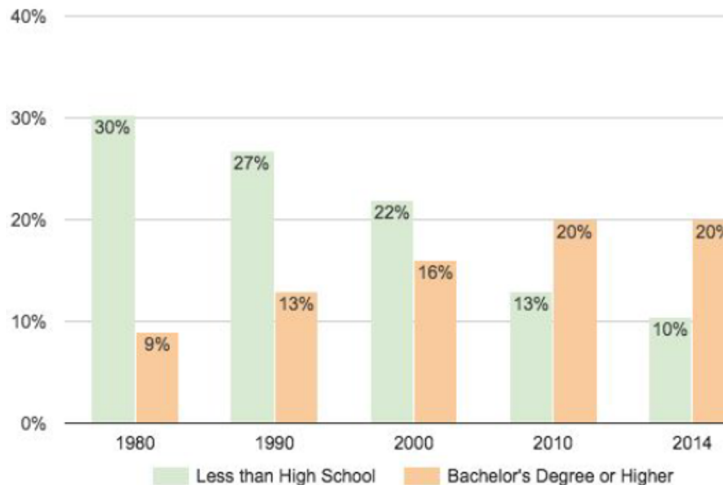
Summer goals:

- Learn about the history of the Black Worker Center and the Black community in Los Angeles
- Engage with the Black community on issues of worker safety in the workplace and worker rights
- Have the opportunity to interact with other professionals in the social justice space

History of the Black Community in Los Angeles

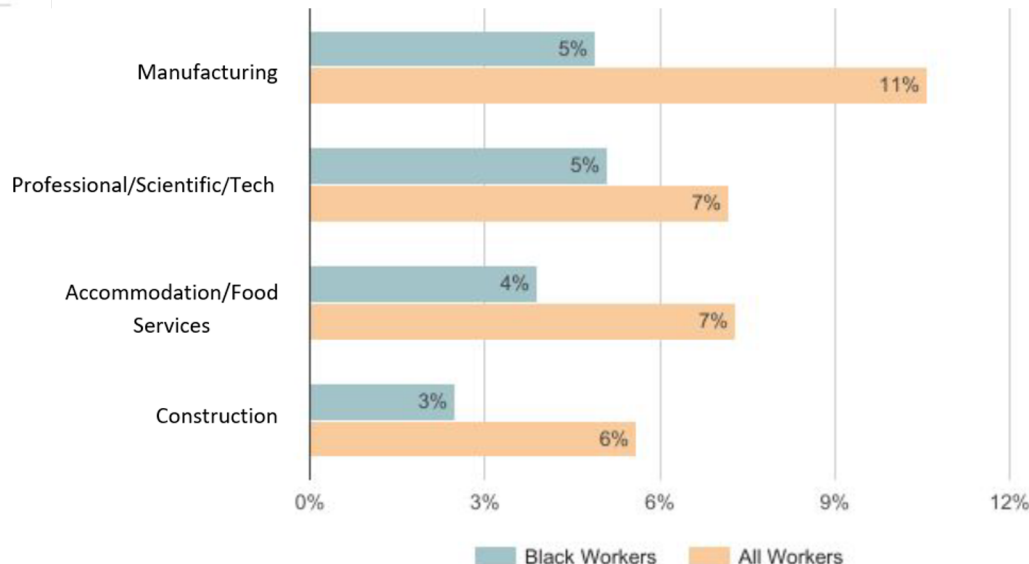
- The Black community in Los Angeles makes up over a third of the Black population in California and experiences negative health outcomes due to:
 - Lack of access to quality jobs
 - Racial discrimination
- Wage gap between Black workers and their white counterparts.
- The Black jobs crisis, surging housing costs, state violence and mass incarceration has resulted in increased discontent in the Black community.

Black Workers - Education and Job Analysis



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2014

Graph 1: % of Black Angelenos with less than a high school degree and Bachelor's degree or higher, 1980-2014



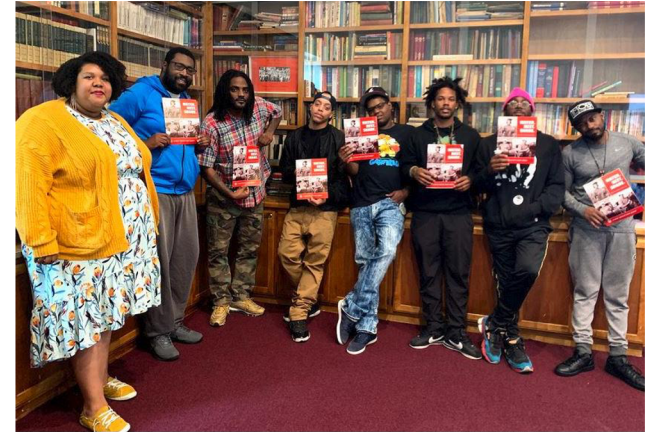
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year sample 2010-2014

Graph 2: % of Black Angelenos employed in four sectors of the workforce, 2010-2014

Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LABWC)

Opening in 2011, the Los Angeles Black Worker Center aims to address:

- Obstacles for Black Workers in the Workforce
- Creating opportunities for sustainable employment
- Increase equity in the labor market



Methods

- Reading about the history of the LABWC
- Reviewed COVID-19 LABWC survey results
- One-on-one interviews with workers and LABWC organizers
- Focus group (10 workers)
- Researching published materials on occupational health and safety

Sample Interview Questions

- How often do you voice your safety concerns at work? Are you ever fearful of retaliation? Have you reported issues on health and safety?
- Are you exposed to any known hazards such as loud noise, temperature, heavy lifting, vibration, or chemicals?
- What support do you wish that your work provided but doesn't? What support do you wish that the LABWC provided but doesn't?

Results

- Spoke with 12 workers
- Professions included:
 - Community organizers
 - Healthcare worker
 - Retired UPS worker
 - Investigator for the California Labor Commissioner
 - Worker in the sex industry
 - Housing Navigator
- Demographics: Black/African descent, 25 years old to retirement age
- Thematic analysis: interpret participant responses in terms of familiarity with safety topics, discover new topics on worker safety

Results

Hazards encountered by Black Workers:

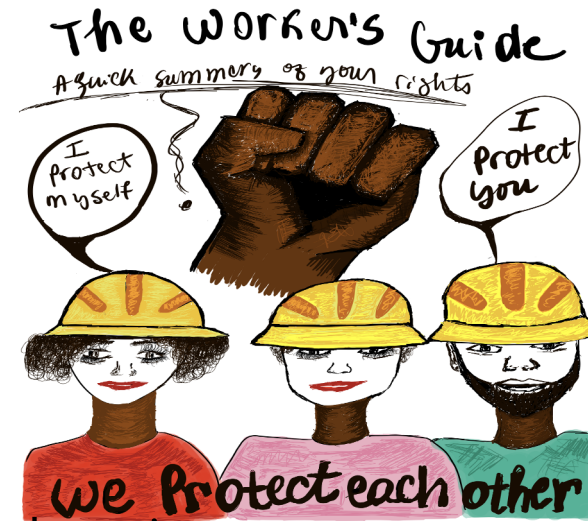
- Workplace violence
 - “Going out to meet clients... that have mental health and developmental disabilities, I need to be able to assess any hazards in my immediate surroundings to keep myself and other clients safe...especially in the case of a client having a mental breakdown.”
- Housing Navigator
- Unknown substances in cleaning products
 - “I am exposed to chemicals that I am unsure of what they are because there is never a conversation around disinfectant cleaners and their risks...in my line of work.” – Worker in the sex industry

Give Back Product: Safety Practices Resource Guide

Interview participants emphasized wanting to know more about certain topics.

Sections include:

- Worker rights
- Stress management
- Hazard identification
- Cal/OSHA and how they can help
- Reporting safety violations
- Health & safety resources for further education



Recommendations for LABWC

- Safety practice resource guides for specific industries
- More worker interviews
- More research that delves into the differences between private and public sector work
- Providing a training to help workers incorporate safety practices
- Post-distribution: Interview workers about the usefulness of the guide and what else they want included
- Share guide with other similar worker centers

Challenges

- Covid-19
- Remote work
- Different time zone
- Worker interviews
- Collaborating and Communication
- Taking pictures!!!



Successes

- A brochure that many workers can readily use to be informed about the different resources and advocate for themselves
- Opportunity to learn more about the occupational health and safety field, the Los Angeles Black community, and the LABWC
- Ability to network with fellow interns and career professionals
- Enhancing project and teamwork skills



Personal Reflection

"This internship has opened my eyes to a lot of things. You go to work every day and you take things for granted and never really pause to think about how an 8-hour shift over a long period can affect your health but it really does. I am glad to know that as public health students, we have the power to influence positively. I learn that it is important to work with the workers who are affected the most and come up with solutions that can help them... It is important to learn about the history, the social context and the bigger issues at play. I also learned about how to effectively work remotely and collaborate with my partner in a way that is both productive and timely."



Personal Reflection



“Looking back over this summer I can say that my time with the Los Angeles Black Worker Center taught me a new way to learn and understand the people I work with in a virtual setting.

I know now how to better advocate for people outside of myself and how little ideas can become big actions.

Using what I’ve learned in the classroom has helped me translate my knowledge into a product that I believe will be beneficial to others.” - Jaasmine

Acknowledgements

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