

## A Worker's Story

Javier Rodriguez was born in Encarnacion, Guanajuato one of nine children. His father and the children worked the fields until they were forced to move to Mexico City when his parents sold the small plot of land in order to feed the family. Without land to harvest maiz, beans, peanuts and garbanzos, the family could not survive in their home town. Javier's father went to the US to help his family survive. But, Javier said, *"I don't think he earned much because when he returned each time our family's condition would stay the same or get worse."*



In Mexico City, *"the house my parents rented (for 11 of them) wasn't more than a kitchen and a large room."* Within two years the family moved again to a small town which Javier said was *"wonderful (because of) plants, animals, wildflowers, rabbits, birds, chameleons and even snakes...the river water was crystal blue."* Javier's true pride was that he helped build a school for the town. *"For me personally, it was so joyful to walk to the classroom for the first time, sit down on new benches and be taught. Besides the school was part of me. I helped construct a place where many people would work for the community's well-being."*

As a young adult Javier worked in a plastics factory. Because of his leadership role in a strike on behalf of workers, the bosses said he was *"spending too much time on co-workers problems."* The owner threatened him to [make him] quit the union but Javier managed to get concessions from the boss to increase workers' salaries and he became a shift supervisor. Fourteen years later he worked for another plastics factory as a supervisor. By then, he was a father of three. A proud Papi, Javier says they are *"very intelligent children and I say this not just because they are my children."*



Within eight years he would lose his job because *“this company was not able to withstand the pressure of free trade and closed.”* That was when their journey to the US began, and after 14 years in the US, Javier Rodriguez was able to gain a high school diploma from Dorothy Stang Adult High School. Javier describes the high school as taught by *“teachers who donate their time so that adults can resume their shortened studies and (some of us) are able to continue to study at the university level....[T]hanks to all those who work towards improving the intellectual level of humanity and make it possible for adults to receive an education that improves our quality of life.”*

**Dorothy Stang Popular Education Adult High School**

P.O. Box 577496, Chicago, IL 60657

Phone: (773) 860-1749

[www.dorothystanghighschool.org](http://www.dorothystanghighschool.org)