



2022: A year of outstanding achievements

The Brazilian Worker Center is proud to continue to fight for immigrants' rights. We began our work 27 years ago, and each year since then we have had the satisfaction of expanding our reach and of impacting the lives of Brazilians and other immigrant communities in Massachusetts.

2022 was a year of hard work and dedication, which was, fortunately, rewarded with significant achievements and accomplishments for our community. And, we arrived at another December with the feeling of a mission accomplished! This was a great year because, after more than 20 years of struggle, now it's official: from July 2023 on, every eligible person will have the right to apply for a driver's license. This will bring more security and quality of life to our communities.

In addition to this achievement, there are countless reasons for which we are grateful. We have prepared this special newsletter to share a retrospective of our work in 2022 and to reinforce our commitment to continue to work on behalf of our immigrant community in the next year. Thank you for your support and trust.

Stay tuned on our social media for news in January 2023!

Happy Holidays and A Happy New Year!

Lenita Reason
Executive Director
Brazilian Worker Center

RETROSPECTIVE

2022 was intense, as we had the opportunity to connect even more with the community through different projects and day-to-day activities. We were at events, fairs, training, meetings, protests, campaigns, and community actions throughout the year.

To understand the impact of our work on the community, here are some of the numbers associated with our services: more than 4,250 calls were answered internally as of December 1st, and we provided personal assistance to more than 1,570 people. And we expect these numbers to continue to grow until December 23rd.

For more information about our work in 2022, check out our retrospective below:





DRIVER'S LICENSE

Our historical achievement

In its 27 years of existence, the Brazilian Worker Center has accomplished significant achievements for the Brazilian community.

While all achievements are valuable, the most recent one has a unique taste: the passing of a Law that allows eligible individuals, regardless of their immigration status, to obtain driver's licenses. The BWC is proud to be the only Brazilian organization leading the Driving Families Forward coalition, which is composed of more than 270 organizations. This coalition was responsible for the campaign in favor of the bill's approval.

Our Executive Director, Lenita Reason, is the co-chair of the coalition, along with 32BJ SEIU, and she has participated in all face-to-face and online meetings led the committee that organized 90% of the ombudspersons, protests, and discussions about the Work and Family Mobility Act, and led the negotiations that resulted in the approval of the law.

After the law was initially passed, the opposition began to work to obtain signatures to bring it to a vote in the Fall elections. Lenita Reason and the coalition did not rest. While representing both the BWC and the DFF coalition, Lenita went to supermarket parking lots to inform voters about the "Decline to Sign" campaign and to try to make voters aware of the significance of the petition that the opposition was collecting signatures for.

Unfortunately, the opposition managed to get the necessary signatures, so the DFF coalition led by the BWC initiated another campaign, the "Yes On 4". We actively participated in all activities and worked with a small committee within the coalition to get enough funds and volunteers to win the campaign.

Participamos ativamente de todas as atividades e trabalhamos com um comitê pequeno dentro da coalizão para conseguir fundos e voluntários suficientes para vencer a campanha. Felizmente, a lei foi validada com 53,7% de apoio, sendo mais de 1.264,110 votos.

Our efforts proved successful once again, as the law was validated by more than 1,264,110 votes (showing that 53.7% of voters in the state supported the Law). But the work is not over! We know how much this Law will positively impact Brazilians and other immigrants in MA, and that's why the BWC continues to work in the implementation phase and participates in the transition team meetings with the Attorney General's Office and Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV).

This is a historic moment for all of us, and we are grateful to be a part of it.



WORKERS' RIGHTS

Our Workers' Rights department, coordinated by André Simões, diversified its activities this year. In addition to assisting labor cases, various activities and training were carried out. In total, 140 labor cases were opened and 24 "Know your Rights" workshops were implemented, with the participation of approximately 160 people.

Among this year's standout events, Building Justice held the "Family and Solidarity Football Tournament" in East Boston, and in partnership with the Painters Union (DC 35 Painters Union), the committee also held the "Building Justice Worker Assembly", at the union headquarters in Rosindale. The department also participated in the bill against wage theft in conjunction with other workers' centers and unions.

We also worked closely with organizations such as the Somerville Worker Center, Connecticut Worker Center, Present Center, Justice at Work, and Attorney General Office.

And finally, we also developed an educational campaign against wage theft and partnered with the Boston College Clinic Civil Rights to research the law that protects domestic workers.

Starting in 2023, we will release educational videos on labor rights.

The mission of our Immigrant Defense Project, led by Lorraine Reiter, is to advocate for immigrants and ensure their rights are respected. In 2022, this project served 653 families and impacted the lives of more than 1,600 people.

Through this project, the BWC assists the community with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) check-ins, confirmation of Immigration court hearing dates, and calling detention centers, lawyers, and/or immigration authorities, as needed. We also help with interpreting documents that people receive from Immigration and we educate the community on how to navigate the Immigration system.

Our staff is always up-to-date and undergoing training. This year, for example, we completed the "Immigration Law", offered by MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition). This certificate will allow the BWC to apply for accreditation BIA (Board of Immigration Appeals) which will grant us permission to complete immigration documents.

Other activities that we participated in 2022 were the Immigration Clinic with the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA), the Citizenship Clinic with MIRA, Immigration Fair with the MIC (Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative), among many others.

DEFENSE OF IMMIGRANTS



To make our work viable, we partnered with important organizations such as the City of Boston, Massachusetts Legal Aid, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Rian Immigrant Center, Alpha Agency, Justice at Work, OSHA, and the Attorney General Office, among others. Among the lawyers and Law Firms that have partnered with us are Brooks Law, Sohail Nassiri, Esq., Foglia Associates, Gabriely Jabbour, and Justice at Work professionals, who always help answer questions and guide our community.

DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS



Through various actions and events, domestic workers also received special attention from the Brazilian Worker Center this year. With the coordination of Lorraine Reiter, 12 cases were initiated related to wage theft (mediation and recovery of values), abuse, labor compensation, and discrimination, among others.

We also conducted monthly training on labor laws for a group of 26 domestic workers. The BWC also participated in the Women Institute of Leadership Development (WILD) summer retreat in Worcester with 14 women who learned about domestic workers' rights and received certificates. In addition to a leadership workshop for domestic workers, with an integration event.

We also attended the online training with the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and training on trauma, domestic violence, and resilience, as well as led a leadership workshop for domestic workers.

NDWA also offered multi-session training for organizers (Dignity, Unity, and Power). The last session and graduation will take place in February 2023 in Texas.

Cases of abuse of domestic workers' rights have been sent to state and federal agencies such as the Attorney General's Office, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC-US), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

These and many other actions aimed to provide the necessary support that domestic workers in our community need to empower themselves and respect their rights.

And to finish the highlights of 2022, we highlight the research in partnership with the Boston College Clinic Civil Rights on the law that protects domestic workers.

VICTORIOUS WOMEN

Providing emotional support and sharing information about health and well-being for women who have survived cancer and experienced other chronic illnesses was another essential service implemented by the Brazilian Worker Center in 2022. The Mulheres Vencedoras project, led by Paula Corrêa, was very important to the Brazilian community.

The project held events such as “Chá das Mulheres” and “Outubro Rosa” training. These events not only served to empower women but also gave them opportunities to socialize among themselves and experience a welcoming and nurturing environment. After a long time of COVID-imposed restrictions, this year, our Mulheres Vencedoras activities were able to be implemented face-to-face, which contributed to greater engagement and sense of belonging among participants.

We invited many speakers to contribute to our events, including cardiologist Dr. Felipe Moura, Jamila Xible, and Cleatia Cassarino (Cambridge Health Alliance) and sponsors who made the events possible: The Cheesecake Factory, Pastelaria Vitoria, Oliveira Deli, Sabor do Brasil, Alexandre Simões, and Bella Mia Flower.iveira Deli, Sabor do Brasil, Alexandre Simões e Bella Mia Flower.





SAFETY & HEALTH

The safety and health of immigrant workers are one of the priorities of the Brazilian Worker Center. That is why the Department of Safety & Health, coordinated by Gizele Bombardier, carried out several activities this year, serving workers in Region 1, which encompasses Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Vermont.

For example, the Fall Prevention course, already traditionally offered by the BWC, capacitated 943 construction workers.

Another course given in 2022 was on Infectious Diseases, which included information on COVID-19, and capacitated workers in the restaurant and cleaning sectors.

The department also participated in the Workers Voice Summit in Washington D.C., representing our Brazilian community in this event of national importance. According to the coordinator, all courses are essential for workers to be aware of safety protocols.

DREAMERS FELLOWSHIP

In 2022, the Brazilian Worker Center continued the Dreamers Fellowship program. Dreamers is a project founded by BWC, Centro Presente, and the Caribbean Youth Club in partnership with the City of Boston through the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA). With the coordination of Andre Coco, Dreamers capacitated 48 Brazilian teenagers with a diversified curriculum. The program focused on entrepreneurship, and the students learned concepts of leadership, finance, behavior, and administration, among others. The Dreamers also participated in yoga and citizenship classes as part of the project's wellness and general knowledge curriculum.

Another new feature was the selection of the most diligent students from previous editions, who were invited to continue in the program's Autumn edition to develop further the startups they had started in the Spring and Summer.

We believe that significant changes always happen with small steps. Hence the importance of programs such as this one that gives young Brazilians the opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally.



DEVELOPMENT

In 2022, for the first time in the history of the Brazilian Worker Center, we created a Development Department led by the Director of Development, Anna Barbosa. During the year, activities focused on creating foundations, collaborating with the communications team to create monthly newsletters to keep partners, foundations, and members of our community updated about our work; programs and services' re-categorization; content creation for the new website; updating program reporting systems for financial agencies; creation and monitoring of development databases and corresponding reports; and research on hundreds of potential funding agencies.

This year, with the tireless support of the BWC team led by Executive Director Lenita Reason, the development department ensured the renewal of BWC's partnership with OSHA through funding Susan Harwood for the 11th consecutive year.

In addition, the department engaged several local businesses as sponsors of the program Mulheres Vencedoras during its summer event, was awarded funding through the Boston Public Health Commission to manage the first edition of the Mindfulness LatinX program, and secured BWC's first financial transparency seal. Finally, the sector's activities culminated in creating sustainable development bases for the organization, significantly contributing to future sustainable organizational growth and expansion.

NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



Recognition

The work of the Brazilian Worker Center that led to the passing of the Work and Family Mobility Law, which will allow eligible residents to obtain Driver's Licenses in Massachusetts, has been recognized by various leaders and entities. On November 14th, the BWC Executive Director, Lenita Reason, and SEIU 32BJ (Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ) staff were honored for their essential contribution to the campaign.

Driver's License Next Steps

The Brazilian Worker Center has released important information to the community about the new law and about obtaining a Driver's License. Here are some tips:

- Don't be fooled: the Driver's License law will only come into force from July 2023.
- At this time, you CAN NOT apply to the RMV (Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles) yet.
- Don't pay ANYONE to apply for the license for you. You must do this yourself and wait until July 2023.
- It is mandatory that you renew or acquire your passport in your country to be eligible to obtain a license from July 1, 2023.
- Ask your family to send you a copy of their Birth Certificate. It will need to be translated into English.



DREAMERS

Classes and activities with students from the Dreamers Fellowship program, offered by the Brazilian Worker Center in partnership with the City of Boston, continued at full speed in November. The students learned about various topics, including a lecture by the Brazilian police officer Fabio de Oliveira Silva, who works at Police Lynn (MA) as a patrol officer. Born and raised in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, he told his life story and taught precious lessons to our learners.

The dreamers also had training on "Leadership and Public Communication," taught by journalist Fabiano Ferreira. They learned about self-leadership, self-discipline, essential planning, focus, and management principles. They also had a class on how to speak in public, with posture techniques and choice of vocabulary.