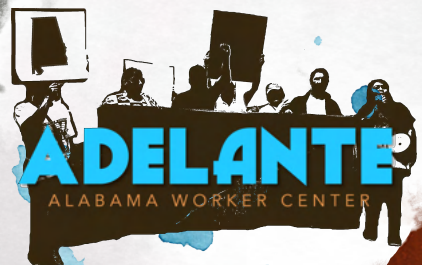
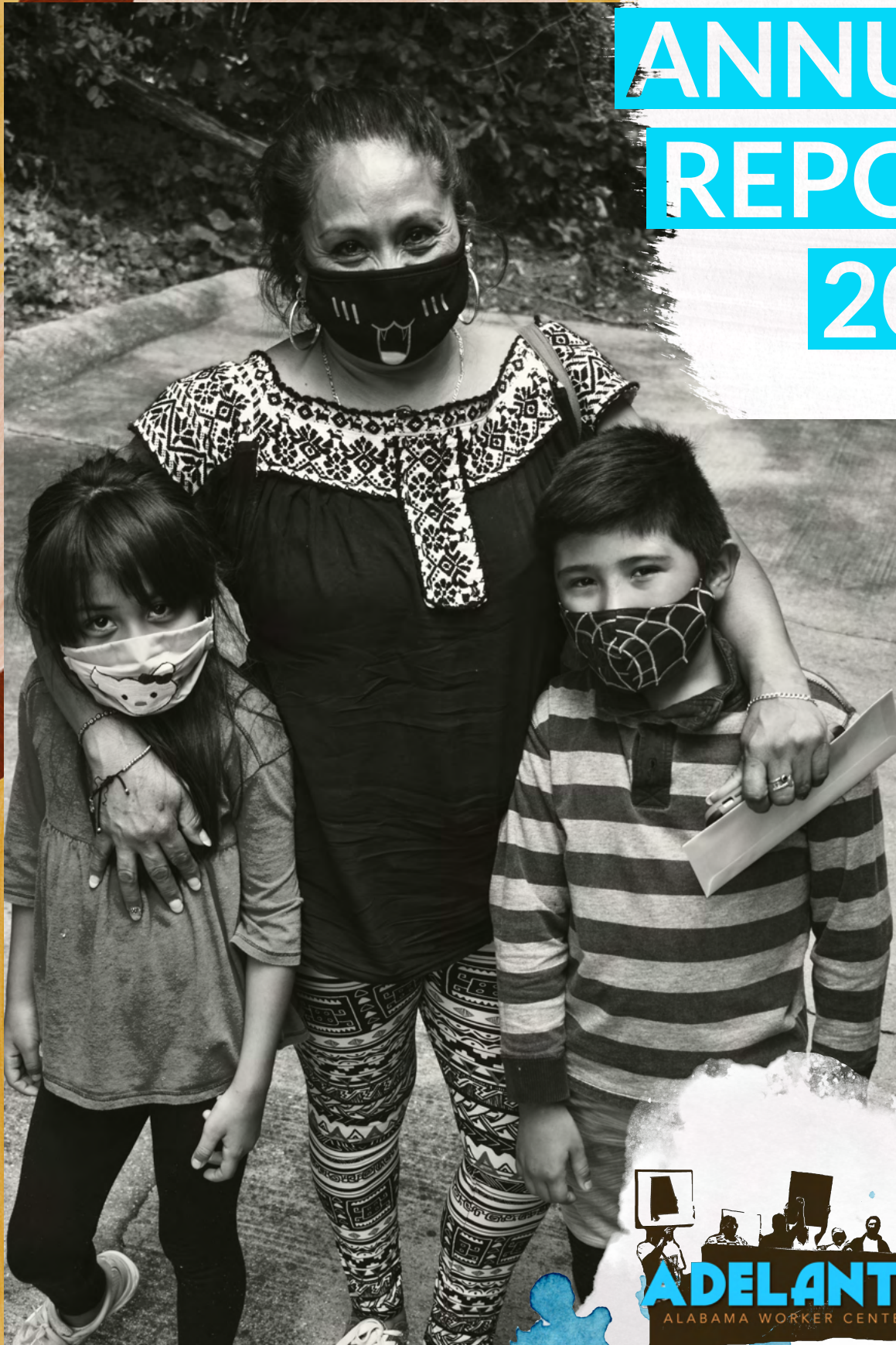


ANNUAL REPORT 2020



our mission & vision



Mission

Adelante Alabama Worker Center unites low-wage and immigrant workers and their families in the Birmingham area to defend our rights, promote our dignity, and pursue justice for all.



Vision

We envision a multiracial worker-led movement for justice, dignity and human rights that lifts up the voices of the most vulnerable and excluded workers, and welcomes individuals of all races, ethnicities, genders, ages, sexualities, beliefs, and immigration statuses. We strive to move our communities forward (adelante) to a world where immigrants, people of color, and all working-class families are respected and safe at work, in the streets, and where they live.

it's time for collective healing

We are still reeling. We haven't been able to grieve 2020 because it still doesn't feel like it's over. We're still in the thick of it.



Yet we are thankful for some of the lessons 2020 taught us, and we savored the year's bright moments all the more for the gloom that surrounded us. We gained a deeper awareness of our interconnectedness, and the importance of mutual care and aid. We saw our members step up to organize a food donation network, often contributing supplies from their own pantries. We redistributed hundreds of thousands of dollars into the hands of Birmingham workers hit hardest by the pandemic. We helped free dozens of people from life-threatening ICE detention and reunite them with their loved ones. We got creative with our tactics, finding ways to meet, train, strategize, organize, take action and build community in virtual spaces.

We never stopped fighting for justice in the workplace and in the streets. We saw how workers in our community – labeled essential but treated as disposable, hailed as heroes but denied a living wage – were pushed so close to the breaking point that they started pushing back.

It's with these victories and the undeniable resiliency of our community in mind that we welcome 2021. We are hopeful that this year will be about rebuilding, about focus on health and rebirth, and opening our doors to more connection and celebration than ever before.

WORKERS' RIGHTS DEFENSE

Our primary work area focuses on informing workers about our rights in the workplace and advocating in individual cases to recover unpaid wages and address instances of workplace discrimination and sexual abuse through mediation, public pressure and direct action. We train members to serve as advocates for their fellow workers and co-facilitate our weekly workers' rights workshop.

This year we:

Completed a survey of Birmingham's low-wage workers

– in order to gain a deeper understanding of the precarious conditions and widespread workplace abuses workers face during the pandemic, and inform future advocacy campaigns to advance workers' rights at the local, state, and national level. The findings of our survey will be published in 2021 as a companion to Alabama Arise's State of Working Alabama Report.

Recovered \$37,800 in stolen wages

– including over \$25,000 in two federal lawsuits on behalf of low-wage workers (a hotel housekeeper and a group of restaurant workers) denied minimum wage and overtime.

I worked at a hotel in Pelham and they started to steal my wages, so I came to Adelante and they helped me since my employer didn't want to pay me what I was owed. I thought that I was entitled only to what was missing from my paycheck but here I was told that they owed me more money in overtime. I had not been aware that they were supposed to pay me overtime. Getting involved with Adelante has been a lovely experience. They're good people and all of them did the best they could to help me, and I won my case! That's why I'm grateful to Adelante, because just like my case was won there are so many other cases that they can help bring to justice.

- Mayuridia Callejas Olguín, Adelante member



DETENTION ABOLITION

01

We hosted the Breaking Cages Leadership Institute—

our first in-depth training specifically for people with direct experience with the prison and detention system. Meeting weekly for several months, Breaking Cages brought together 14 Black, brown, indigenous, and immigrant participants from the Birmingham community and across the country to hone their organizing, campaign strategy, political advocacy, and media skills.

02

We continued to work in coalition to abolish ICE detention in our state and free detained persons from the infamous Etowah County Detention Center—

the volunteer-led Shut Down Etowah campaign took major steps in exposing the rampant spread of COVID-19 and other life-threatening conditions confronted by those living within the jail. Alongside the Etowah Freedom Fund (a local bail fund incubated by Adelante and SDE), volunteers coordinated solidarity housing and travel for dozens of people released from Etowah.

03

We filed a lawsuit seeking the release of 18 medically vulnerable individuals detained in Etowah at risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19—

(with co-counsel from the Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild) in April of 2020. Although we did not win the case in court, almost all of our clients have since been released, and we continue to fight for the release of all persons caged in Etowah through legal action and public advocacy.

Adelante's Etowah Habeas Project provides pro bono representation to individuals seeking their release from the Etowah County Detention Center through federal habeas corpus petitions. ICE sends detained persons to Etowah from all over the country, subjecting them to extremely prolonged detention and horrendous conditions in units inside the county jail. Many of Adelante's habeas clients have been caged without a bond hearing for multiple years; they include longtime green card holders fighting for their right to remain in this country, asylum seekers fleeing torture and persecution, and stateless individuals who ICE is unable to deport.

This year, we succeeded in getting 15 of our clients released from Etowah and reunited with their families.



José García Rivera, a US citizen unlawfully detained by ICE for over seven years was released in November. Adelante (with co-counsel Southern Poverty Law Project) represented José on his habeas corpus petition seeking his release.

COMMUNITY DEPORTATION DEFENSE

Guided by our member-led immigrants' rights committee, we've implemented several programs including a rapid response coalition—structured around an emergency hotline that mobilizes a network of organizations and community leaders to respond to ICE activity, conducting “Know Your Rights” trainings and immediately intervening in detainments—and an accompaniment program—pairing community members with our network of over 50 volunteers who provide support for dozens of community members at ICE check-ins, court dates and other areas where there is a high risk of ICE presence. Below are some important victories from 2020:



Gervasio

Jorge

Jesús

With critical support from our comrades in the Birmingham Chapter of Black Lives Matter, we succeeded in getting Jefferson County District Attorney Danny Carr to drop the criminal charges against police brutality victim Jesús. Last year, Sheriff's deputies wrongfully arrested, tased, and injured Jesus and terrorized his pregnant wife and children when they invaded the family's home to serve a warrant on someone who did not live there.

ARTS & CULTURE



Día de los Muertos

In light of the devastating effects of COVID-19 and the deep pain and anger we felt as even more Black lives were taken at the hands of the police state, our members opted to erect an outdoor altar and host a physically distanced Day of the Dead celebration—the only non-virtual event we hosted in 2020 after quarantine began. Community members honored the lives of those we lost with a powerful and intimate gathering and a beautiful ofrenda.



Nueva Esperanza Women's Group

Adelante's immigrant women's support group convenes on a weekly basis (now through Zoom), providing opportunities for learning, creating, and leadership development. This group has become a pipeline for unstoppable female leadership within the organization.





Adelante TV

Created to facilitate tough conversations about current issues and keep our community connected from the comfort and safety of our homes, our Adelante TV Facebook Live series addressed issues like machismo (toxic masculinity), mental health stigma and resources, and the intersection between LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities with guests from around the globe.



Photos from Adelante's Day of the Dead celebration, 2020.



fondo para trabajadores excluidos
fund for excluded workers

 **Colwal**

/koo'wal/ koh-WAHL

in Q'anjob'al

v: to help or support; ayudar o apoyar

SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

Colwal Fund for Excluded Workers

Colwal means “help” or “support” in Q’anjob’al, one of several indigenous languages spoken by Adelante members, and reflects our belief in mutual aid—solidarity not charity.

We raised over \$200,000—much of it from individual allies heeding our call to redistribute their stimulus checks—and redistributed it directly in the hands of our community’s most economically vulnerable in the form of \$500 cash grants.

Here are some of the ways we approached the public health and economic crisis in a way that aligns with our values:



Cash makes a difference

Many well-meaning charities take agency away from those they’re helping by making decisions about what poor people most need; we believe no one knows better what’s best for our community than themselves.



Community not corporations

We prefer to put resources into the hands of struggling community members instead of landlords, utility companies, and large corporations.



Chosen by peers

A selection committee made up of mostly Adelante members reviews applications and considers every case carefully through the lens of their personal experience.



Cultivating relationships

The application process includes a phone interview where we seek to get to know the applicants, listening to how they’ve been affected by the pandemic, and giving them the opportunity to join us in organizing for their own dignity and freedom.



Support for Domestic Workers

We helped 994 people sign up to receive cash assistance from the National Domestic Workers’ Alliance’s Coronavirus Care Fund, totaling over \$400,000 in additional financial support to domestic workers across Alabama.

Mutual Aid Network

A group of Adelante members launched Mano a Mano (“hand in hand”), a mutual aid community support network. The group collects and redistributes food and other essential household items, often from their own pantries, to families in extreme need.

OUR TEAM

STAFF



Isaac Guazo

This year, we welcomed a new Economic Justice Organizer, Isaac Guazo. Isaac is a queer Mexican chilango with a deep interest in the holistic development of healthy communities. His professional experience is as pastor of the Methodist Church of Mexico where he developed social justice programs in addition to groups focused on spirituality and sexual diversity. Before joining our staff, Isaac worked with Adelante's Workers' Rights Defense Program as an organizing fellow.

Gabriel Cabán Cubero, Immigrant Justice Organizer
Isaac Guazo, Economic Justice Organizer
Miriam Nava, Membership Coordinator
Victoria Siciliano, Director of Administration and Fundraising
Resha Swanson, Communications & Policy Coordinator
Jessica Vosburgh, Executive and Legal Director

Also this year, we sadly said goodbye to our amazing Immigrant Justice Organizer, Gabriel Cabán Cubero. Their passion for the movement has no equal and we wish them all the best in their next chapter!

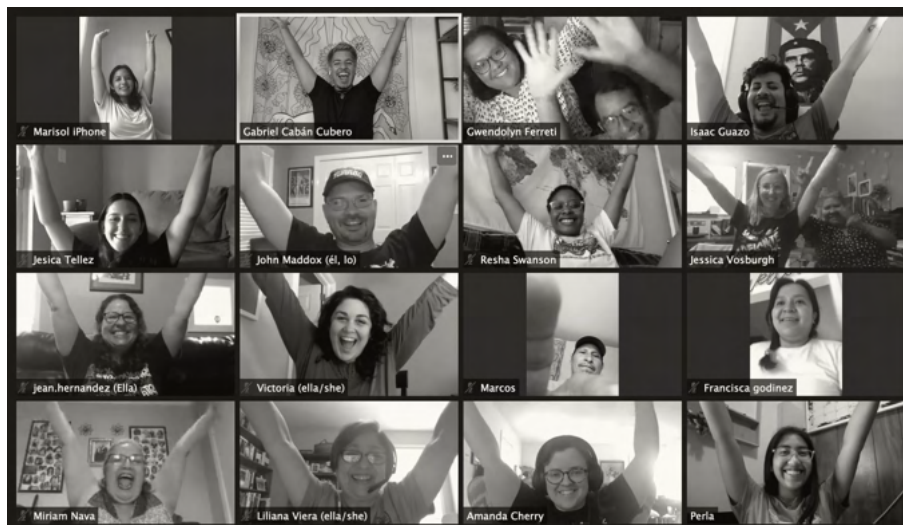
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“The last few years at Adelante have been some of the most influential, life-giving, formative, and heart wrenching years of my life. Adelante gave me space to bring my full self to work, while always keeping me grounded in reality. Every time I talk about Adelante, I mention how ‘you can’t get any more grassroots than this’... All the things I am going to miss cannot be listed here, but they are written on my heart. I am soothed only by the privilege I have to continue to volunteer with Adelante and keep Adelante as my movement home.”
- Gabriel



Gabriel Cabán Cubero

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



In keeping with our commitment to worker leadership, the majority of seats on our Board of Directors is reserved for Adelante members—low-wage and immigrant workers in the Birmingham area. Board members are nominated and elected annually by our membership. Our member-majority, elected Board of Directors model is essential to Adelante's organizational identity and philosophy, as it puts in practice our commitment to worker leadership and collective governance within our own organization, reflecting the change we want to see in the world.

Julia Calderón*
Marcos Baltazar*
John Maddox

Elected in 2020:
Marisol Aguilar*
Francisca Godínez*
Jesica Tellez*
Jean Hernández (reelected)

****member of Adelante***

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Fellowships provide an opportunity for community members and allies to learn about and contribute to different aspects of Adelante's organizing work. Fellows are matched with a particular campaign, project, or work area depending upon Adelante's needs and priorities during the fellowship term.

2020's Fellows:



Maricela García
Workers' Rights
Organizing Fellow



Rubayet Lasker
Peggy Browning
Summer Legal
Fellow

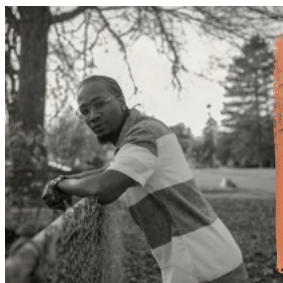


Andrea Torres
Youth Organizing
Fellow



Yolanda Farías
Domestic Workers
Organizing Fellow;
Immigrants' Rights Fellow

ADELANTE IN THE NEWS



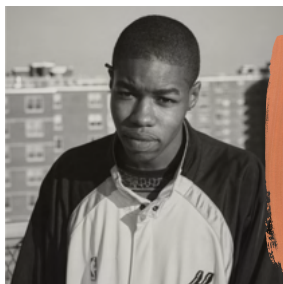
In These Times: “Immigrants Detained by ICE Say They Were Thrown in Solitary for Requesting Covid-19 Tests,” December 2, 2020

“During an outbreak at Etowah County Detention Center, immigrants say solitary confinement was also used as medical isolation, against ICE guidelines.” Featuring testimony from detainee activist and Adelante habeas client Karim Golding, and Shemoi Edwards, a participant of Adelante’s Breaking Cages Leadership Institute.



NPR Marketplace: “Washington relief packages leave out many domestic workers,” April 17, 2020

Describes the ways domestic workers have been overlooked in federal COVID-19 relief efforts; featuring testimony from Adelante Board Member, Marisol Aguilar. “A lot of people say I shouldn’t be working, that I’m putting myself at risk. But I’m also at risk of losing my home, of not having enough to eat,” she said. [Aguilar’s] husband, a house painter who has diabetes, a COVID-19 risk factor, also continues to work when he can.”



The Intercept: “Burials are cheaper than deportations: Virus unleashes terror in a troubled ICE detention center,” April 12, 2020

Describes the direct action that took place inside Etowah County Detention Center exposing the complete lack of even bare minimum health and safety practices against Coronavirus, and the aftermath and retaliation faced after the action. Features actions taken by Shut Down Etowah campaign leaders and context provided by Adelante’s Executive Director, Jessica Vosburgh.



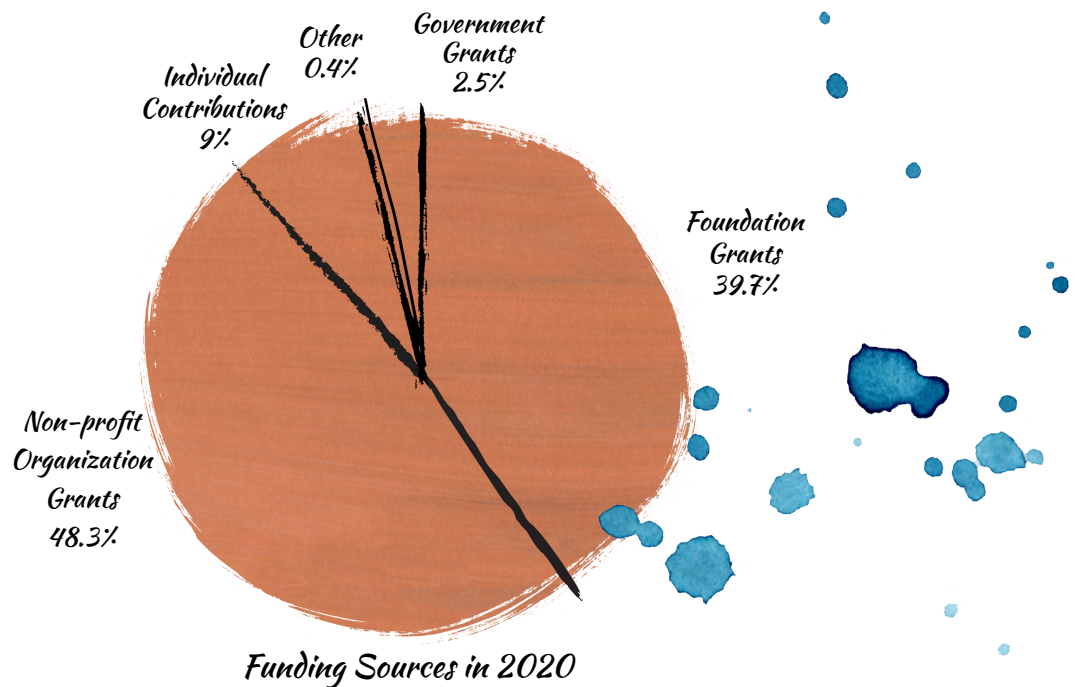
AL.com: “Undocumented Alabamian savors rare victory in immigration court,” February 16, 2020

Details the story of longtime Adelante member and immigrants’ rights activist, Angel Aldana, who was placed in deportation proceedings after being swindled by a corrupt immigration attorney. Aldana was represented by Adelante in an extremely difficult case with narrow odds. After years of fighting his case in court and an outpouring of community support, Aldana was granted cancellation of removal, securing a green card and putting him on the path to citizenship.

For links to these articles and more, visit:
<http://adelantealabama.org/news/adelante-in-the-news/>

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

2020 was the first time Adelante ever took on such ambitious fundraising goals solely for the purpose of redistributing these resources to the folks in our community that needed them the most. Hundreds of individual donors gave incredible support to Adelante's Colwal Fund, a big number of which gave the entirety or majority of their government stimulus checks. To every single donor who gave in a time of uncertainty and panic: you are what we will remember fondly about this year. Thank you.



We thank the following Foundations and Organizations for their support in 2020:

Alabama Civil Justice Foundation
Amalgamated Foundation: Families and Workers Fund
Blue Oak Foundation
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
Detention Watch Network
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Economic Policy Institute - EARN in the South
Hill-Snowdon Foundation
Hispanics in Philanthropy
Jobs with Justice: Worker Solidarity Fund
National Domestic Workers' Alliance
North Star Fund
Peggy Browning Fund
Southern Poverty Law Center
Ratliff Charitable Foundation

Thank you to the whole Adelante family who
made this work possible: members, volunteers,
donors, supporters, allies, and friends.
To all of you who have struggled to survive
through 2020, we dedicate this poem to you.

Early Morning

Juan Gelman

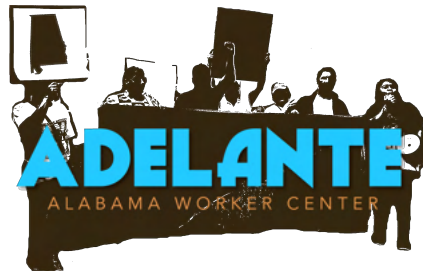
Translation to English by Victoria Siciliano

Juices from the sky dampen the violent city's early morning.
She breathes for us.

We are the ones who have ignited love so that it may last,
so that it may survive every loneliness.

We have burned fear, we have faced pain head-to-head
before deserving this hope.

We have opened the windows to give her a thousand countenances.



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