

Carpenter organizer gets reprieve before deportation

José Cobián, better known to local Carpenters as union organizer José Luis Mendoza, won temporary freedom Jan. 23 when Federal Judge Anna Brown declined to impose house arrest in the weeks before his Feb. 13 immigration hearing.

As reported in the Nov. 17 NW Labor Press, staff at the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters were taken by surprise last August when "Luis" was arrested and it came to light that their co-worker of five years had entered and worked in the

United States illegally. Cobián, 36, left his native Colima, Mexico in 1989 to take under-the-table construction jobs in the Portland area. He taught himself to speak fluent English, and in 1996 was able to obtain false documents, which he used as the foundation to

build a life resembling that of a citizen. He joined the union, became an organizer, married, had two children, and bought a home in Molalla. All that unraveled last year when federal agents showed up at his house.

Cobián pled guilty in September to passport fraud and was released on bail pending sentencing. Because he was legally unable to work, his union co-workers stepped forward with donations to support him and his family. His wife Maria de Rosario Lucio, who was visiting from Mexico on a temporary visa when they met, had been able to remain in the United States because of his supposed citizenship status; now that is due to be cancelled as well.

Leading up to his sentencing, Cobián's supporters in the union appealed to Judge Brown for leniency, with letters and a DVD of videotaped testimonials.

"I have found him to be a dedicated, loyal and hardworking advocate for the working class ... [who] stood up against the exploitation of workers in a very public way," wrote Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters President Bruce Dennis. "While he may have violated some of the laws of this country, I feel he has embraced the democratic spirit of America."

Cobián could have been sentenced to a prison term of six months to two years for the passport violation. But Assistant U.S. Attorney Kemp Strickland, saying Cobián was not considered a flight risk and had cooperated at



JOSÉ COBIÁN

every point in the government's investigation, recommended the lowest sentence within the federal guidelines — house arrest. Judge Brown went further, questioning what useful purpose house arrest would serve if Cobián is due to be deported anyway. She sentenced Cobián to three years probation instead.

It was an emotional moment for Cobián and two dozen supporters from the Carpenters who filled the courtroom. Brown said she'd watched the DVD, and told Cobián he was fortunate to have so many people standing by him.

The judge asked Cobián if he had anything to say. "I did something wrong," Cobián said, "and I'm deeply sorry for that, especially because it hurt so many people, including my family and co-workers. It's something I want to teach my kids: If you lie, you've got to accept the consequences."

For Cobián, the consequences will almost certainly be a return to Mexico and ban from ever coming back to the United States. Cobián and his union supporters hope he will be allowed to depart voluntarily with his family rather than be deported under custody. Eight-year-old Alexis Mendoza and her four-year-old brother Dante are U.S. citizens by birthright, and have never been to Mexico. Cobián is trying to sell his home, and hopes to use the proceeds to repay his co-workers for their support.

Unlike the federal civil case against him, Cobián's Feb. 13 immigration hearing won't be open to the public.



"I CAN GO TO ONE PLACE TO FIX IT ALL?"



Bright Now! Dental

PROTECTING UNION MEMBERS' SMILES AND WALLETS.
Orthodontics Available

Quality, Affordable Family Dental Care

- General, cosmetic, and specialty care
- Most insurance and union plans accepted
- Easy credit and low monthly payments, O.A.C.
- Evening and Saturday appointments
- Ask about our **Confident Dental Discount Program**

Grants Pass
1021 NE 6th St.
Grants Pass, OR 97526
541-479-6696
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Gresham
443 NW Burnside Road
Gresham, OR 97030
503-492-8487
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Wilsonville
25700 SW Argyle Ave.
Wilsonville, OR 97070
503-682-8552
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Klamath Falls
4052 S. 6th St.
Klamath Falls, OR 97603
541-883-7706
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Milwaukie
17186 SE McLoughlin Blvd.
Milwaukie, OR 97267
503-659-2525
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Portland
3580 SE 82nd Ave.
Portland, OR 97266
503-777-0761
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Salem
831 Lancaster Mall Dr. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-362-8359
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.

Salmon Creek
2101 NE 129th St.
Vancouver, WA 98686
360-574-4574
Chau Ngo, D.D.S., M.S.
Phong Bui, D.M.D.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Stirewalt, P.C.

Fisher's Landing
3250 SE 164th Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98683
360-891-1999
Peter Vu, D.M.D.
Chau Ngo, D.D.S.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Stirewalt, P.C.

1-888-BRIGHT NOW
www.brightnow.com
Serving unions for over 25 years

Healthy-Heart Screening for Tradeswomen

Take a step toward lowering your risk for heart disease and stroke by participating in this FREE, 30-minute screening that includes:

- Cholesterol (total, HDL)
- Blood Pressure
- Blood Sugar
- Body Fat Measurement
- Consultation with nurse about your results
- Refreshments, socializing and network with other tradeswomen after the screening.

This screening made possible through a generous donation by the Women of Good Samaritan. Coordination by Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. Many thanks to our hosts at the HVAC & Metals Institute!

www.legacyhealth.org

Legacy Heart Services



Legacy Health System, a non-profit organization, includes Emanuel Hospital & Health Center, Emanuel Children's Hospital, Good Samaritan Hospital & Medical Center, Meridian Park Hospital, Mount Hood Medical Center, Salmon Creek Hospital, Legacy Clinics and CareMark/Managed HealthCare Northwest PPO. ©2007

Screening Date & Location:

Tuesday, February 27, 2007
4:00-7:00 p.m. (Appointments scheduled every 15 minutes)

HVAC & Metals Institute
2379 N.E. 178th
Portland, Oregon 97230

FREE—Appointments required.
Spaces are limited. Please call 503-335-3500 to schedule your appointment and for more information.

NO FASTING REQUIRED.

CHE-0001

LEGAL PROBLEMS??

For \$16 a month coverage includes:

- ❖ Unlimited toll-free phone consultation with attorneys.
- ❖ A comprehensive will with yearly updates is included.
- ❖ Representation for traffic tickets, accidents, criminal, and civil suits.
- ❖ Coverage on IRS tax audits.
- ❖ Divorce, child custody, bankruptcy and many more benefits.*

THESE LEGAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY THE VERY BEST LAW FIRMS IN OREGON & WASHINGTON.

* Some services not 100% covered

For more information, call 503-760-2456 or toll-free at (888) 252-7930

www.prepaidlegal.com/info/randallnix