

How Belem found her voice.

She was a hard worker believing in the values her grandfather instilled far away on a small ranch in Zacatecas. Every day she drove the twisting mountain road to scrub toilets, vacuum, strip beds, clean the mess that tourists leave in their wake. For years upon years she said nothing. Belem always worked that extra hour or two when asked, came in to cover for sick companions. Head down she did her job.

She started Full Circle's Family Leadership with quiet determination. The third week she did not appear at class. "My boss asked me to work" she told me later. " I have never said no, never questioned, never spoke up to my needs, but I had to miss a class! and so I told him yesterday that I would no longer work overtime on Mondays." A week passed before she explained "I have taken Monday's off work, because I must be ready to come to learn."

Two months later Belem spoke up in class to complain that Mountain View was limiting the number of cars permitted to two. "What if there are 3 workers?" She declared. "This is not right, we are only trying to work hard, do our jobs, raise our families." Belem went home that night and found her voice. She rallied her neighbors to go to the manager. She queried on the reasons, she developed an alternative plan, she spoke passionately about justice. Belem found her voice and was heard. They changed the policy that night. Belem found her power that night. May Belem's voice ring out for change and justice, a leader emerges.