

Stories from the **Community**

This case study is part of a series of stories from residents, business owners, workers, and others who have shaped — or been shaped by — the implementation of the California Transformative Climate Communities grant program (TCC). To learn more about TCC, visit: <https://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/tcc/>.

Documenting these stories is part of UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation's evaluation of groundbreaking progress in seven TCC communities: Fresno, Ontario, Pomona, Stockton, and the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Northeast San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and Watts.

Training Programs in South LA Prepare Young Residents to Further their Professional Goals

This story explores how TCC-funded workforce training programs empower young South LA residents with the skills and certifications needed to jumpstart their careers. The profile highlights the stories of Angeles Martinez, who participated in the GRID Alternatives Solar Installation Basics Training program, and Kevin Mazzuriego, who took part in the Coalition for Responsible Community Development construction training. The individual stories show how trainees learned both the hard and soft skills needed to enter their desired industries. Learn more about [TCC-funded workforce development activities](#).

Interviews for this case study were conducted in April of 2025.

ANGELES MARTINEZ was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles. At 21 years old, she lives in the neighborhood with her parents and is exploring career options. After a brief stint studying cinematography in college, Martinez realized the program didn't fit her financial and career goals and left to seek other opportunities. She was considering either starting her own business or finding a cleaning job when a friend suggested she apply for the GRID Alternatives Solar Installation Basics Training program. GRID Alternatives' nonprofit mission and environmental focus appealed to Martinez, who had started a tree-planting club in high school.

Martinez gained an array of professional skills and certifications in the program. As someone who has often been nervous to talk to others, she learned about the critical role communication plays in maintaining job safety and became a more confident speaker. She learned how to use equipment, such as properly setting up and using ladders safely. She also obtained OSHA and CPR certifications, which are necessary to work in the solar field.



Angeles Martinez works on a solar installation during her training hours. Credit: GRID Alternatives Greater LA

“ It sounded too good to be true — you get paid, you get to keep the equipment, and I didn’t need to know anything about construction. And being a part of [helping communities] feels really impactful.

– ANGELES MARTINEZ

The work was physically demanding, and Martinez noted that she was one of the very few women in the program. While this fact was sometimes discouraging, the other trainees were very supportive, and she was bolstered by having a woman as an instructor. Martinez also had a female friend who had graduated from the program.

The program also benefited Martinez beyond these new skills. She made an hourly wage and developed relationships with other trainees, building her social and professional network. Martinez put her earnings toward family expenses (like rent and groceries).

“ Some people warned that [solar installation] isn’t for everyone — it’s really physical and sometimes it’s hard conditions, like heat. You have to climb tall homes and buildings. But I do have a little fight in me — I’m still gonna do it.

– ANGELES MARTINEZ

Having graduated from the solar training program, Martinez now wants to continue to build her knowledge of the clean energy and transportation field, and earn additional certifications and qualifications to increase her earning potential. She is motivated to seek additional training and is enrolled in a course on electric vehicle technology offered by Charter Oak Adult Education.

“ Being in the program, I really put myself out there. It took me out of my comfort zone. Now, I’m hungry to get as much knowledge as I possibly can.

– ANGELES MARTINEZ

KEVIN MAZZURIEGO, like Martinez, has lived in South LA all his life and now lives in the neighborhood with his parents. While in high school, Mazzuriego participated in YouthBuild, a program offered by the Coalition for Responsible Community Development to provide construction internships and learning opportunities for youth. Eager to find unionized work in the construction sector, Mazzuriego later applied to the coalition’s TCC-funded construction training opportunity to kick-start that journey.

“ I decided to get involved when I saw that it was training for union work — I’m interested in union construction work. The program covered a different construction subject each week for seven weeks, so we learned a lot.

– KEVIN MAZZURIEGO

While the program covered many topics, Mazzuriego was particularly interested in developing skills and qualifications to support a career in industrial or commercial painting. He noted that painting would be the safest of the trades — an important consideration for him. In the program, he learned some of the essential apprenticeship readiness skills required by the LA and Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, such as preparing walls and areas to be painted without getting paint on other surfaces, using a paint spray machine, and more.

“ They provide us with OSHA cards and CPR cards, and it’s a game changer. Outside of the program, I would have to take another class for the OSHA card specifically.

– KEVIN MAZZURIEGO

Mazzuriego also learned to use hand and power tools, to do demolition, and to remove drywall. The trainees were assigned projects to practice using these skills, such as building a small table. The program included site visits to observe trades, such as carpentry and welding, in action. Finally, Mazzuriego participated in a daylong financial skills workshop, where he learned about maintaining credit and other financial planning skills.

Mazzuriego developed relationships in the program, learning from the instructor and working with other trainees to stay motivated, strengthen skills, and stay safe. An apprenticeship is the next step on his path to becoming a journeyman. Now, he says, he has all he needs to pursue an apprenticeship, including a union contact provided by the program.

“ The lessons from the program were part physical, like physically doing the work with your hands, and part mental, like having motivation and energy for the jobs and making sure you get the right sleep.

– KEVIN MAZZURIEGO

UPDATE: Kevin’s hard work and new skills have helped him to accomplish his stated goal of joining a local union. Kevin was accepted into Local 1036, the Painters Union, in June 2026.