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Community and Labor: Synergies, Frictions, and Innovations

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The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."
—From The Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

Can labor and community learn to dance together?

Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly

Labor is the working class at work. Community, or at least the low and moderate income communities that occupy most of *Progressive Planning*'s attention, is the working class at home. How hard can it be for these two incarnations of the working class to cooperate?

As we know, the answer is: harder than you'd think. The development of US capitalism and US metropolitan areas has divided workers from working class communities as part of a broader trajectory that has blunted class consciousness in the country (and in others, including neighboring Canada). In terms of popular conceptions and often the labor movement's self-conception, over the last century-plus "labor" has shifted from the working class to organized labor, and from organized labor as a whole to collection of narrower sectoral interests. The birthplace of May Day (in Chicago in 1886) now celebrates Labor Day. Changing economic geography, modern zoning, suburbanization and sprawl and far-flung transportation and commuting systems have also divided workplaces from communities.

The irony is that though the dominant discourse continues to loudly deny the importance of class in America, business as a *class* has become highly unified around a neoliberal model that has brought the widest economic *class* divisions in nearly a century. Denunciations of redistributive policy proposals as fomenting "class conflict" overlook the fact that the conflict has been proceeding at a high pitch for 40 years or so . . . but with only the business side on the offensive.

We do not mean to claim that class trumps all other divides (and unifiers) in society. Other distinctions such as race, gender and immigration status have huge impacts on life chances and economic and social outcomes ranging from job access to treatment by the police. But class offers an important avenue for building solidarity across these divides—or for supercharging them—and has unique importance for the income and wealth that increasingly shape politics and family opportunity.

Which Labor, Which Community?

In a 1999 Seventh Generation on a similar topic, *Progressive Planning* co-editor Tom Angotti rhetorically asked, "Which labor, which community?" Many of the issues he raised still haunt us.

On the labor side, many major unions still have limited willingness to address environmental issues, and environmental justice in particular. The building trades unions often appear to favor building just about anything, and have rarely rallied around issues of community displacement or the shortage of affordable housing. Many unions have been resistant to affirmative action or to legitimate calls for public employee accountability. More generally, unions exert most of

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On the Cover
Clergy and political leaders sign solidarity pledge in support of port truck drivers following 24-hour strike.
Photo: International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Building Power

The Los Angeles Black Worker Center Turns Excluded Workers into Forces for Change

Yelizavetta Kofman

In August of 1963, 300,000 Americans, mostly Black, marched through Washington, DC to demand economic justice and civil rights. The country's Black population was struggling, relegated to second-class citizen status by economic and political repression. Fifty years later, economic injustice along racial lines persists. The Economic Policy Institute recently reported that Black unemployment is more than twice the rate of White unemployment—just as it was in 1963. The situation is particularly bad in Los Angeles, where the Black unemployment rate is a staggering 17 percent and 30 percent of Black workers earn less than $12 an hour. Lack of quality employment has left Black communities without adequate health care access, fair credit options or decent public schools. The stalled progress of economic justice in Black communities and growing inequality throughout the country serve as forceful reminders that the need for worker-led social movement in America is great—a call the Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LA BWC) is striving to answer through a unique model of community-labor partnership.

The LA BWC began its work in 2008 by simply asking workers to tell their stories. "When we did, it was like opening the flood gates," says Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, LA BWC's founding director and a former union organizer. Over months of meetings, hearings, and town halls, workers discussed the lack of quality jobs available in Los Angeles' Black communities. As one worker explained, "if you look at Jordan Downs and Nickerson Gardens [two housing projects in Watts, Los Angeles], you will find there is no employment in a five mile radius." In a sprawling city like Los Angeles, that means workers have to make a long and expensive commute on low wages.

Story after story told of unfair treatment on the job. Laborer Will Harris *(all worker names are pseudonyms)*, a father of five and a union member, talked about being laid off a week before Christmas, despite his exceptional dedication to his job and 20-years of construction experience. Another union member, Eric Stevens, discussed how he hasn't held a steady job for a full year since becoming a sheet metal journeyman more than a decade ago.

Overall, workers provided a sobering assessment of their needs: access to quality jobs, protection from discrimination and training. The LA BWC's goal became to address these needs, through political education as well as job training. As Rev. Kelvin Sauls said at an early meeting: "We have a lot of workers today who don't know our history in civil rights and labor rights, which go hand in hand. We need to teach our history, particularly the proud history of the Civil Rights Movement and the need to contribute to that tradition." Members and staff were confident that implementing worker-led solutions would lead to tremendous changes for workers and communities in Los Angeles.

As a first step in securing jobs for Black workers, the LA BWC decided to initially focus on the public construction sector. Unionized construction jobs offer an attainable career ladder that has not been outsourced, unlike the long-term trend in blue-

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Photos by Richard Stevenson Jr.

collar manufacturing. In fact, as the LA BWC was getting off the ground, policy makers were allocating billions of taxpayer dollars for construction projects as an answer to the nationwide recession.

In 2010, then-Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa proposed a "30/10" plan that would accomplish 30 years' worth of transit projects in just 10 years and create 160,000 new jobs, partly by securing federal loans. The first project to break ground would be the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor, a light rail line running through the heart of South Los Angeles. Finally, good jobs were coming to predominantly Black neighborhoods. The LA BWC was determined that local residents would have access to them.

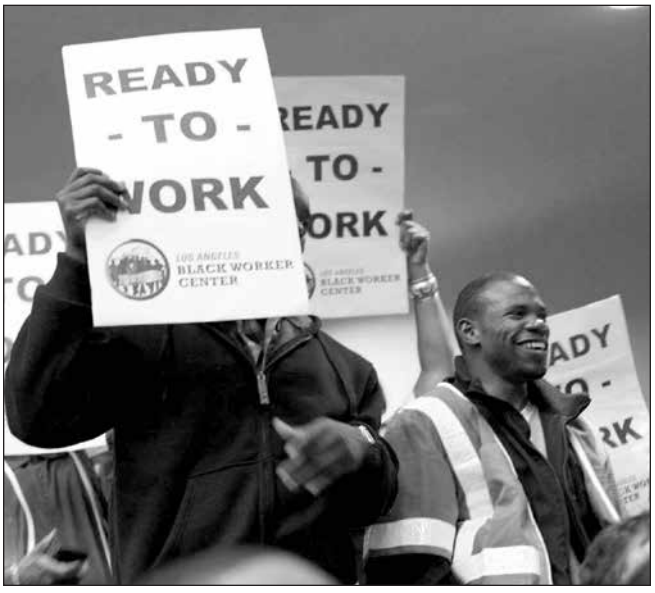
Pipelines and Politics:
A Model for Industry-level Change in LA

Black workers remain chronically underrepresented in construction, despite decades of Black worker activism for inclusion. In recent years, the City of Los Angeles recognized the need to address diversity deficits in the construction sector. Officials worked with local unions and community organizations to expand access to apprenticeship programs. However, impressive gains in completion of apprenticeship programs by Black workers—which jumped 39% between 1999 and 2007—have not translated proportionally to gains in Black employment in unionized construction careers. On the job sites, where it counts, Black workers remain on the sidelines.

The LA BWC resolved that the 30/10 Metro projects would be different. They recognized that a major opportunity to achieve change was through a Project Labor Agreement (PLA), which Metro was already considering implementing. Under a PLA, ground rules are established on wages, work site conditions and protocol for resolving labor disputes on public works projects; the owner of the project (Metro, in this case), the unions and the contractors all agree to be bound by the agreement so that the project runs smoothly. Some PLAs, including the proposed Metro PLA, also include the community as a stakeholder in the project, expanding the agreement to include workforce goals such as increasing access to jobs for local residents and disadvantaged workers. The proposed Metro PLA built on years of policy work by the County Federation of Labor, the LA/Orange County Building Trades Council and organizations like the Los Angles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE). LA BWC members and staff lobbied elected representatives and the Metro Board of Directors to pass a master PLA for the 30/10 plan.

On January 26, 2012, the Metro Board unanimously approved the PLA. Dozens of LA BWC members wearing hardhats were there to cheer the decision.

LA BWC member Andre speaks out at Metro public comment meeting in support of strengthening the PLA.



LA BWC members take action at a Metro meeting.

Though a major victory, the LA BWC knew that the PLA alone would not solve the issues of access and retention for Black workers. First, in a city like Los Angeles, properly defining "targeted" community residents is crucial. A two-mile radius can include such a wide expanse of people that the spirit of the agreement—to reach residents of directly impacted and disadvantaged neighborhoods—is easily sidestepped. A UCLA Labor Center analysis of nine Los Angeles projects with local hire provisions, for example, found that while the 30 percent local hire requirements were met or exceeded, only about 5 percent came from the zip code area in which the project was actually being constructed. Another limitation is that these policies do not directly address the underrepresentation of Black workers in construction. In California, Proposition 209, which bars preferential treatment on the basis of race in public contracting and employment, limits the available tools policy makers have to address inequities.

"The PLA is a really great launching point toward greater access," says Smallwood-Cuevas. "Our role is to figure out how to strengthen the PLA and how to reach the most excluded communities."

To meet these challenges, the LA BWC mobilized its resources: relationships with labor leaders and a community hungry for change. After many meetings and actions by LA BWC members, Metro agreed to modify the PLA to include stronger language in support of diversity, stronger research-based disadvantaged worker criteria and federal civil rights and equal opportunity language.

The next step was ensuring enforcement of the PLA. The community wanted a robust system of oversight and it wanted to be part of the solution. Working with graduate students at USC, the LA BWC developed a community monitoring tool—a report card that graded contractors based on their past performance on compliance with civil rights and labor laws, commitment to community relationships, transparency and commitment to diversity. LA BWC members were trained to contact contractors, talk to construction workers on job sites and conduct research on contractors' previous projects. The LA BWC presented their findings in meetings with contractors and Metro.

The community's efforts paid off. Art Leahy, Metro's CEO, came to the LA BWC to meet with members and shared his commitment to an equitable workforce; he committed to meeting with the LA BWC quarterly to review the PLA goals and progress. LA BWC members also met with Walsh Shea, the contractor awarded the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor project. After hearing the community's concerns, Walsh Shea agreed to work with the LA BWC to make sure their subcontractors, foremen and superintendents understand the PLA and the community's expectations of the project. "The workers have been diligent, persistent, unwavering, completely clear and transparent about why this is so important," says Smallwood-Cuevas. "And I think that courage has been recognized—people are responding to that."

While city officials and employers are crucial, the most important long-term partner in bringing Black workers back into the public construction sector is the building trades. The LA BWC is working with allies at IBEW Local 11, SMART Local 105, UA Local 250, the African American Council of Union Ironworkers, the Painters and Allied Trades District Council 36 and others to build support for long-term training and leadership development of Black workers. As a first step, the LA BWC developed a Black Leaders in Green (BLING) institute, which introduces workers to the building trades and does orientations in the community. The LA BWC also put together a mentorship program where union construction workers who have successfully taken the apprenticeship entrance exams provide tutoring every Saturday.

The labor-community partnership is not always an easy one, says Smallwood-Cuevas. "There was a lot of resentment in the community about unions. A lot of workers asked, 'Why do we want to have union construction? Unions don't open up to our community.' We also had former union members tell us they didn't feel supported by their unions and dropped out or were unjustly let go."

But slowly initial union partnerships are developing into long-term relationships. Recently, the Presidents of SMART Local 105 and IBEW Local 11 recommended the LA BWC for a Labor Innovation in the Twenty-First Century (LIFT) grant, stating in a joint statement that they "see the LA BWC as an important ally in local efforts to organize across

LA BWC members and community participate in a building trades orientation.

race and industry to build power and participation of LA-area workers." The LA BWC is hopeful many more unions will follow with their support.

Future Challenges: Resources, Power-sharing and Scale

In just a few years, the LA BWC has grown from a few members to a fully-fledged organization with four full-time staff members, over 650 participating members and contacts with 2,500 community members and workers. The challenge now is to make sure they have the resources to continue their work and to bring their vision of labor-community partnership to scale.

To do that, the LA BWC is convinced that the labor movement must open up to worker centers. "Unfortunately, the majority of working people are not in a union. So a majority of the potential power base is unemployed and underemployed," notes Smallwood-Cuevas. "We have to think of new ways to harness that power. It's not that community has all the answers. We simply believe that there are opportunities for us to expand the conversation and the consciousness of workers."

One way for labor to tap worker strength is through unions' tremendous training resources, what Smallwood-Cuevas fears has become an "Ivory Tower" of worker education because so few workers have access to a union. Another challenge is showing that unions are open to African American leadership at the very top of union organizations, where currently the numbers are scarce. The LA BWC has been successful in developing union members into community leaders, who are then even stronger leaders in their union—a community-labor leadership feedback loop that has enormous potential.

Drawing on the success of their efforts in the public construction industry, the LA BWC is looking to expand to other industries where Black workers make up a large segment of the labor force and there is opportunity to improve job quality, such as the health care industry in the wake of the Affordable Care Act and the retail industry, the fastest growing employer of Black workers. The LA BWC is hopeful that community-labor alliances will grow exponentially to support the work of worker centers in Los Angeles and nationwide with these efforts. "Though the LA BWC is small and our gains are not as deep and sweeping as many unions are used to, our potential is great and the power is being built," says Smallwood-Cuevas. "That's where we see ourselves as equals with labor. We're equal in our vision for all Americans to have good jobs that pay a family wage." P²

Risk-Taking and Coalition Politics

Lessons from the Living Wage NYC Campaign

Jeffrey D. Broxmeyer and Erin R. Michaels

To enact pro-worker public policy, labor unions must disrupt business-friendly "politics as usual." Yet, organized labor is more cautious in its policy advocacy than workplace organizing. Many unions are often reluctant to risk damaging relationships with important policymakers who, in turn, are reliant on powerful business interests. Union allies, on the other hand, are often more willing to "rock the boat" with confrontational tactics that pressure elected officials through direct action. Evidence from the Living Wage NYC campaign suggests that faith and community partners can push unions into greater political risk-taking, which may lead to stronger policy gains. However, when union preferences overpower the voices of coalition partners, then the long-term viability of pro-worker policy can be diminished.

The Living Wage NYC campaign, active from 2010 to 2012, was an effort to push New York City government to create community-sustaining jobs. The campaign successfully passed the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, a living wage mandate of $10 per hour tied to city-sponsored economic development projects. The scope of the law was substantially narrowed during the legislative process to cover only those directly receiving city subsidies, thereby excluding the bill's original target, retail tenants, who are indirectly subsidized by taxpayer money. This weaker policy outcome was largely due to the coalition's crisis of internal democracy and disagreement over how aggressively to negotiate with elected officials.

The Living Wage NYC campaign provoked a much-needed public debate about New York City's role in producing economic inequality. The rise of low-wage service jobs in the United States is made possible by urban growth models that publicly subsidize real estate developers without placing guidelines on the types of jobs created. Developers pass on lower rents to service employers, who then pay workers low wages. Operating under this paradigm, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's three terms in office accelerated the gap between the city's rich and poor. Non-union service work, especially low-wage retail, is now among the fastest growing sources of employment. Nearly half of New York City retail workers make less than $10 per hour.

Jeffrey D. Broxmeyer and **Erin Michaels** are both doctoral students at the City University of New York Graduate Center, Broxmeyer in political science and Michaels in sociology. A more in-depth analysis of this case will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming book *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement,* edited by Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott.

Authors are listed alphabetically to indicate their equal contributions to the research and writing of this article.

Campaign Origins

The idea for a citywide law began with a local campaign in the Bronx from 2005 to 2009 over the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory into a mall. The developer refused to accept a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) that would guarantee living wages and community space. The Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU) joined in coalition with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition to block the

Armory's redevelopment without a CBA, delivering Mayor Bloomberg a rare defeat on economic development issues. From this local struggle, a citywide partnership of faith and community groups led by the RWDSU rallied around the adoption of a citywide living wage law that would cover big box retailers and malls receiving taxpayer money.

The RWDSU is an activist union that has experimented with labor-community coalitions to win organizing drives in small-shop settings. Through its relationship with the Micah Institute, located at the New York Theological Seminary, the coalition tapped into an extensive network of churches based in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. The RWDSU also recruited long-standing anti-poverty groups to the campaign, such as New York Communities for Change and Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, as well as neighborhood organizations like Good Old Lower East Side and West Side Neighborhood Alliance. Labor backed groups such as the National Employment Law Project and Good Jobs New York contributed legal advice and policy expertise. As the living wage campaign gained momentum, political clubs, anti-hunger advocates and Occupy Wall Street protesters turned out in force to meetings, public events and city council hearings. Mobilizing under Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision for social justice, these groups argued "Now is the time" to ensure fair wages. The Living Wage bill would be a step in that direction by requiring companies receiving public subsidies to pay employees at least $10 per hour.

Beneficiaries of the city's prevailing system of distributing public subsidies were staunchly opposed to the living wage bill. The political opposition included Mayor Bloomberg, the Real Estate Board of New York, the New York Metropolitan Retail Association, the Food Alliance Industry Alliance, the *New York Post* and two building trades unions. In contrast, public opinion polls showed that over 70% of New Yorkers favored the living wage proposal. Nevertheless, opponents argued the bill would harm the city's ability to attract new investment.

The Living Wage NYC campaign's strategy was to pressure the city council through grassroots lobbying. To win, the bill needed a ve-

Photo: Erin Michaels

Rally outside City Hall as City Council overrides Mayor Bloomberg's veto.

to-proof majority from the city council, and therefore the support of councilwoman Christine Quinn. As Speaker, Quinn controlled the flow of legislation. She was a close ally of Mayor Bloomberg, most notably in overturning term limits and delaying the passage of paid sick days legislation. Yet, Quinn's own mayoral ambitions meant she needed to court voters in the upcoming election. The Living Wage NYC campaign, and especially the RWDSU, calculated that given enough time, Speaker Quinn would move the living wage bill through legislative roadblocks. In addition to public demonstrations and insider lobbying, campaign activists urged more aggressive tactics such as blocking traffic, picketing the mayor's house, civil disobedience and the need to "shame and blame" reluctant council members. However, the RWDSU, through its political director, blocked discussions about direct action. Debates also regularly arose within the coalition to assess whether Quinn was a potential ally, as the RWDSU maintained, or too favorable to business concerns, as many clergy and community activists believed.

Integral to the campaign's success was its impressive mobilization capacity. To press the city council into action, living wage advocates gathered supporters' postcards, coordinated constituent phone calls, generated publicity and staged mass rallies. Baptist and Pentecostal churches, in particular, mobilized entire congregations of Black and Latino supporters. Thousands of Living Wage supporters filled pews across the city to urge reform at crucial moments such as the campaign's January 2011 rollout, in April when the bill was stalled and later that November before the its final hearing. Campaign events took on the feel of religious revivals. On multiple occasions, living wage activists turned out energetic crowds by the hundreds during workdays for press conferences, city council hearings and community board meetings. Up until the negotiations between Speaker Quinn and leadership of the RWDSU, the coalition continued to grow in size.

Coalition Dynamics

Throughout the campaign, latent tensions existed between community and faith groups about decision-making and strategy. As in other collaborations between labor unions and community groups, the RWDSU was by far the largest and best-resourced organization at the table. For example, the union hired key living wage staff from the community and faith groups to support their work on the campaign. Overall campaign decisions were made informally through consultation between the representatives of the most active groups. From its central position within the campaign, the RWDSU navigated these informal channels and coordinated communication between secular and faith groups. Typically, plans would be presented at meetings to the full coalition for further debate after a round of informal discussion.

Negotiations with Speaker Quinn exacerbated these underlying tensions within the coalition. After two years of holding the living wage at arms length, Quinn was finally brought to the bargaining table by the campaign's swelling grassroots pressure. In January 2012, Speaker Quinn called the RWDSU to broker a compromise. As a condition of the deal, corporate retail tenants receiving indirect subsidies in the form of reduced rents were removed from the bill's coverage. Quinn also promised greater transparency in development policy and additional financial incentives to encourage developers to voluntarily pay living wages.

Leaders of the RWDSU unveiled the details of Quinn's new version of the living wage bill at a coalition meet-

Photo: Jeffrey Broxmeyer

Speaker Christine Quinn at the living wage coalition press conference celebrating the passage of the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, before she stormed out.

ing after the agreement had already been publicized in the media. At this meeting, several active member organizations objected to the narrowing of the bill. As one former RWDSU staff member later noted, "The key issue was covering tenants, that was the real fight because that's where most retail workers are." Living wage activists also objected to being excluded from negotiations with Quinn and to the lack of prior consultation and forewarning before the RWDSU went public with the compromise. Longstanding living wage activists interpreted the episode to mean that the RWDSU valued its relationship to Speaker Quinn over the union's relationship to the coalition.

Ultimately, the coalition agreed to support Speaker Quinn's compromise on the condition that stronger mechanisms of consultation would be put into place going forward. The union agreed to form a "policy team" with representatives of community and faith groups that would have future decision-making power. The architecture of the legislation, however, was already settled and a crucial opportunity to strengthen the legislation was missed.

A Win for Workers—But How Many?

Results have been mixed since the endorsement of the final compromise bill. Speaker Quinn's version of the bill passed in April 2012. Later that June, a two-thirds council vote overrode the mayor's veto. Despite a failed challenge by the Bloomberg Administration in federal court, Local Law 37 officially went into effect in September 2012. According to a recent report by the RWDSU, in its first nine months the mandate covered 12,488 jobs across 18 projects. This report is encouraging, considering living wage experts estimated the final bill would likely cover between 400 and 900 workers per year. However, most of these covered jobs are in workplaces that are already unionized, such as the airline industry, and not low-wage retail. It is unclear how much progress can be attributed to the living wage mandate.

In addition, the future of the living wage remains uncertain. New York City will elect a new mayor in 2013 and leading candidates have declared support for the living wage. But election year promises can be elusive. Prior research by Stephanie Luce of the Murphy Institute suggests that living wage laws are rarely enforced in the absence of ongoing grassroots pressure. Although the RWDSU brought financial resources and policy expertise to the coalition, the faith and community groups generated the campaign's moral authority and mobilization capacity. Unfortunately, the Living Wage NYC campaign rapidly demobilized in the wake of the legislative victory. Many of its most dedicated activists have moved on.

In place of a vigilant coalition to oversee implementation, the RWDSU is counting on its close working relationship with Speaker Quinn. The union endorsed Quinn early in her mayoral bid and its former political director has joined her council staff. On the campaign trail, Quinn has shed her long reluctance to publicly embrace the living wage and now holds it up as one of her signature legislative accomplishments. Given the persistent strength of business lobbies, however, it is unclear whether Quinn or any other mayor-elect will follow through with strong enforcement after the campaign season is over. The mistrust between Speaker Quinn and living wage activists is well illustrated by the April 30, 2012 press conference celebrating the bill's passage. During this conference, Quinn chastised the entire coalition in front of cameras after one activist from the crowd shouted that Mayor Bloomberg was a "Pharaoh." She then she abruptly stormed out of the ceremony. Reverend Michael Walrond of First Corinthian Baptist Church took the podium and criticized Quinn's departure, explaining, "What we witnessed is when persons take a stance for political expediency but don't take a stance for justice."

Regardless of lingering uncertainty, the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act represents a new precedent in city policy about what can be done to lift workers out of poverty. If Local Law 37 is successful, the RWDSU hopes that it can be expanded to cover corporate retail tenants. Meanwhile, the Kingsbridge Armory case in the Bronx, demonstrates what sustained grassroots pressure can accomplish. In August 2013, the Kingsbridge National Ice Center Partners and local community groups announced that the Armory would finally be redeveloped. After eight years of struggle, the Armory will be rebuilt into an ice-skating rink through a CBA that includes living wage jobs, local hiring provisions and ample community space. P²

Building a Sturdy Blue-Green Coalition at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach

Jessica Durrum

A week before Labor Day, about 30 Los Angeles-Long Beach port truck drivers walked off the job, joining the waves of low-wage worker strikes across the country.

The drivers' 24-hour strike was elaborate, extending up to 70 miles away from the company, Green Fleet Systems, as teams of mobile pickets chased strike-breaking trucks to picket them at their destinations. Hundreds of supporters from the Teamsters and other labor unions, alongside community and environmental justice groups rallied at the truck yard, eight miles from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Over 20 faith leaders and elected officials lent moral and political support, from walking the picket line in the middle of the night to accompanying the drivers through a tense stand-off with management as they attempted to return to work at the strike's end.

The outpouring of support for the striking drivers has its roots in a seven-year campaign advanced by an ambitious, innovative coalition, the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports. In 2006, nearly 40 diverse organizations joined forces to radically transform the port trucking industry in Los Angeles and Long Beach. Their mission: cleaning the air of deadly emissions and uplifting a workforce of over 16,000 low-wage workers at one of the most critical sites to global trade.

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The ports of poverty and pollution

Together, the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach make up the largest port complex in the Western Hemisphere. Over $300 billion in cargo flows through the two ports each year. Goods movement is one sector of the economy that has thrived after decades of global economic restructuring that sent manufacturing jobs from the U.S.—many of them from Los Angeles and Long Beach—to shores with cheaper labor and weaker environmental laws.

However, the prosperity generated by the rise in port traffic has not been shared evenly. In the backyard of the ports and along the corridors traveled by the trucks carrying containerized goods are dense urban neighborhoods that have borne the brunt of two major externalities of an unregulated port trucking industry: lethal pollution and poverty jobs.

The ports had long been characterized by dirty diesel emissions that were literally clouding the air and killing people. A 2007 LAANE study concluded that port trucks were causing over $1.4 billion of health impacts *every year,* with three people dying *every week* because of emissions from port trucks. Low-income communities of color disproportionately suffered the impact of these "diesel death zones," creating an environmental justice crisis.

Meanwhile, trucking companies have also shifted to the public the very cost of doing business. Although port trucking can't be offshored like manufacturing—for the practical reality that merchandise physically has to get from the ship to the shelves—jobs for port truck drivers have suffered from the same race to the

bottom. Since deregulation of the trucking sector in the 1980s, what were once good, union jobs became low-wage jobs with no benefits. Without industry oversight, trucking companies began disguising their employees as "independent contractors," passing on the main cost of running a trucking business to their drivers: trucks (including all related expenses such as fuel, maintenance and insurance). By misclassifying drivers, trucking companies also avoid paying unemployment and payroll taxes, and subvert laws guaranteeing employees' rights, such as minimum wage, overtime, workers compensation and the right to organize. This exacerbated the environmental crisis, as drivers could not properly maintain their old diesel rigs, let alone afford the newest, low-emissions trucks.

Reimagining a new system

For years, various groups had been tackling the environmental and economic crises from separate fronts. Community-based environmental justice groups including East Yards Communities for Environmental Justice, Communities for Better Environment and Coalition for a Safe Environment and national environmental organizations such as the NRDC and the Sierra Club had been organizing to hold the ports accountable for the environmental impact of their operations. Drivers had also been self-organizing for years to improve working conditions, even shutting down the ports entirely in 1988, 1993 and 1996. However, as long as they were misclassified as independent contractors, their very right to organize was denied.

In 2006, a political opportunity emerged. The two ports launched the Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP), a platform to mitigate the environmental impact of port operations. The CAAP itself was already a community victory; the ports adopted it in direct response to community organizing and a National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) lawsuit that was inhibiting port infrastructure expansion. Yet this initial victory was only a step. A broader coalition, bringing multiple perspectives, voices and expertise would be necessary to craft an alternative solution to radically transform the port trucking industry.

Bringing together that multiplicity of perspectives presented a challenge in and of itself. Most critically, environmental and labor groups had to first overcome misperceptions that, for example, the Teamsters care more about jobs than healthy air and environmentalists just care about hugging trees and saving spotted owls.

In helping bridge differences and bring everyone to the table to begin to find common cause, LAANE—the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy—played a critical role. Over the past 20 years, LAANE has built diverse coalitions between community and labor groups to win substantial victories for working families such as living wage ordinances and community-benefits agreements. Its campaigns champion the role local government can play in securing decent working and environmental standards in key local industries and the regional economy. LAANE's trajectory of building trust between community groups and the labor movement situated it in a unique position as a trusted broker.

Environmental and labor groups had to overcome misperceptions that the Teamsters care more about jobs than healthy air, and environmentalists just care about hugging trees and saving spotted owls.

The "blue and green" groups were joined by public health, immigrant rights, and faith-based organizations—nearly 40 in all—in launching the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports (CCSP) in late 2006. Through initial series of in-depth, honest conversations, groups overcame initial wariness, built trust and developed a shared analysis that recognized that the issues of poverty and pollution shared a common root cause: an unaccountable industry.

In reimagining the port trucking system, the CCSP crafted a policy that met its agreed-upon principles of being comprehensive, accountable and sustainable: The Clean Truck Program. In order to do business at the ports, trucking companies would have to enter

Photos: International Brotherhood of Teamsters

ABOVE AND AT RIGHT
Community members and faith and political leaders provided critical support to a successful 24-hour strike at port trucking company Green Fleet Systems in August 2013

Photo: Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports

Thousands of port truck drivers and community members took action during the effort to pass a comprehensive, sustainable Clean Truck Program.

Photo: Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports

Drastic emissions reductions since the Clean Truck Program banned dirty trucks at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are in jeopardy until the economic model of port trucking is transformed.

into a direct contractual relationship with the ports and meet basic standards. Most importantly, only low-emissions "clean" trucks would be permitted entry and companies would be required to hire their drivers as employees, rather than as independent contractors. Critical to long-term sustainability, companies would have to take responsibility for costs of operations and maintenance of new trucks, rather than pushing costs onto the shoulders of low-wage drivers. Otherwise, clean trucks would soon become dirty trucks.

The CCSP carried out a massive organizing effort. They mobilized thousands of community members and drivers to take action, testifying at Harbor Commission meetings and Los Angeles City Hall hearings, signing petitions and postcards, lobbying, rallying in the streets and holding a "die-in" at the ports.

LAANE research also played a key role in framing the issue and quantifying the high public cost of the dysfunctional system. It also helped document that, despite an artificial perceived divide between drivers and community interests, in many cases they are one and the same. LAANE researchers conducted a survey of port drivers, which revealed that many drivers—the vast majority of whom are Latino immigrants—live in the same communities that were suffering the health impact of the diesel pollution.

In 2008, the coalition achieved a groundbreaking victory when the Port of LA Harbor Commission passed the Clean Truck Program. Today, the entire port trucking fleet has been replaced with new clean trucks. Diesel emissions have been dramatically reduced by as much as 90%, resulting in over 400 fewer premature deaths to date, based on an analysis of data from the California Air Resource Board.

Subsequent successes and challenges

The concerted coalition-building work prepared the CCSP to weather subsequent challenges. Proposing standards for operations, after 30 years without any, stirred up intense opposition from industry. Powerful global interests along the supply chain like Wal-Mart and other big box stores exert downward pressure to keep costs as low as possible. Local trucking company owners have kept costs low—and in many cases remained quite profitable—precisely because of the lack of oversight since deregulation. To fight the proposed standards, the previously fractured port trucking industry organized.

A month before the Port of LA passed the Clean Truck Program, the Port of Long Beach broke from the process. Caving to industry pressure, it passed a program that would require clean trucks, but that would not require companies to take responsibility for directly hiring their drivers.

Since then, Los Angeles' Clean Truck Program has been significantly diminished by the trucking industry's 2008 lawsuit arguing that federal deregulation prohibited the ports from setting any trucking standards whatsoever. The case wound its way to the US Supreme Court, whose June

Photo: International Brotherhood of Teamsters

2013 decision upheld the basic framework of the program. However, it removed two provisions the community had fought for—parking requirements and placards. This followed the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision, which enjoined the employee provision in 2011. As a result, communities and drivers have been left with an unsustainable program.

Where a more fragile, transactional coalition might have split, the CCSP remained intact. Environmental partners did not walk away once the dirty diesel trucks were off the road. The Teamsters did not abandon the blue-green alliance once the driver economics were stripped from the comprehensive policy they had fought for, leaving drivers worse off than before, now saddled with predatory lease payments for the new clean trucks.

The fact that the core partners are still at the table today is a testament to the deep coalition building over the years, through which coalition partners have taken on each other's struggles as interdependent. In doing so, they have learned from each other. Perhaps the most emblematic of the impact of the CCSP was the Teamsters' reversal on their position on one of the most contentious environmental issues of the past decade. In 2008, Teamster President James Hoffa announced at a gathering of port activists from across the country that the Teamsters were leaving the coalition for increased drilling in ANWR, citing the power of alliances like the CCSP in advancing a shared vision of good jobs and environmental sustainability.

Similarly, community members who may have viewed port drivers as the source of the problem prior to joining the coalition have taken on the drivers' struggle as their own. Coalition partners have supported drivers as they organize for improved working conditions and a voice on the job in the absence of a comprehensive policy solution. In the spring of 2012, when drivers at port trucking company Toll Forwarding were undergoing an intense organizing battle, CCSP partners volunteered as monitors, serving as a community presence at the truck yard and interviewing drivers to document the company's retaliatory actions. Drivers won a historic election

to join the Teamsters—the first of its kind in 30 years—and ratified a contract in December 2012 that set a new standard for high-road port trucking companies.

Today, the coalition is engaged on multiple fronts, working with drivers to organize and to address misclassification while also engaging the Port of LA to ensure robust enforcement of the existing Clean Truck Program. At the same time, there are competing priorities for groups' limited resources and capacity, including two intense environmental justice battles against freeway expansion and the proposed construction of a massive rail yard. Before, when the CCSP was working on passing a comprehensive policy, the economic and environmental issues could move forward in tandem. Navigating this changing landscape requires sensitivity and flexibility.

The coalition's impact has extended beyond the ports. The deep organizing and relationship-building between labor and environmental organizations helped lay the groundwork for LAANE's subsequent campaign to transform LA's waste and recycling system. A similar coalition including the Teamsters, NRDC, and Sierra Club recently passed a landmark policy to establish basic labor and environmental standards for companies that collect trash and recyclables from LA's businesses and apartment buildings.

While certainly not the first or only such "blue-green" alliance, the CCSP is still strong and vibrant after seven years of victories and setbacks, offering lessons for similar efforts. Critically, the CCSP has been rooted in a diverse group of committed organizations, a foundation grounded in honesty and transparency and a shared analysis and long-term vision for change. Whether supporting striking drivers or testifying at Harbor Commission meetings, the coalition's partners continue to work together towards the interdependent goals of economic and environmental justice at the ports. P²

Photo: International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Following a 24-hour strike, Green Fleet Services driver Byron Contreras speaks before hundreds of labor and community supporters, alongside faith and political leaders.

7th Generation: Can labor and community learn to dance together?

By Maria Kennedy & Chris Tilly

continued from page 2

their energy defending "insiders," the employed people who are their members, giving insufficient attention to the needs of "outsiders" such as the long-term unemployed or the millions of people, especially young men of color, who are in prison or barred from many jobs due to a felony conviction. In this issue, labor's stance on New York's Atlantic Yards project (Norman Oder), the hotel workers' union's single-minded pursuit of the construction of more large (and therefore unionizable) hotels (Ian Thomas MacDonald) and the sudden shift to back-room negotiation by labor organizations in the recent Living Wage NYC coalition (Jeffrey Broxmeyer and Erin Michaels) are all examples of labor choosing this side of the tradeoff.

But communities can also pursue narrow self-interest. Neighborhood organizations are often dominated by local elites, and may equally resist affordable housing or prisoner reentry programs—from a NIMBY or anti-tax perspective. Perhaps the labor movement does not invest enough in broader social issues, but many social movements likewise overlook worker rights or wrongly discount unionized workers—many under attack from employers at this point—as hopelessly privileged. For example, sometimes it seems like the food justice movement is concerned about environmental impacts, inner city nutrition, even animal rights—to the exclusion of the rights of the workers who harvest, process and serve the food (see Margaret Gray's article in this issue).

This Labor, This Community

But as planners, our main role is not to critique the ills of society, but to do something about them. And most of the articles in this issue point to positive—or at least mixed—steps forward. On the community side, new currents and important innovations have emerged, especially from communities of color, that target transformative change and inclusive models for building community voice. Ties between workers and communities have remained a stronger tradition in Latin America, and the labor and community partners in Alejandra Ancheita's story of a Northern Mexico mining community have held strong on linking, community, environmental and job issues, even in the face of massive repression. But in some ways the same is true in Jessica Durrum's analysis of the Los Angeles Port Trucks Campaign, a campaign joining communities around the port with port truckers in demanding environmental justice and worker rights, with the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) providing the organizing glue to hold the coalition together. Also in Los Angeles, the LA Food Policy Council, serving a community mandate, adopted a food purchasing policy that addressed nutrition, environment *and* worker rights through an intense process of discussion and negotiation, as Alexa Delwiche (who staffed the process) and Joann Lo explain.

These are stories of labor reaching out as well. Again, there is an extraordinary Latin American example, Rodolfo Elbert's account of a factory making common cause with the surrounding community north of Buenos Aires. But Beth Gutelius and Peter Brogan bring to the table examples of teachers' unions in New York, Toronto, and—especially —Chicago which to a greater or lesser extent spoke to community education needs in order to build stronger coalitions. And for that matter, the New York living wage campaign involved labor giving as well as taking. The recent (September 2013) AFL-CIO convention featured unprecedented outreach to community groups from the National Committee for La Raza to the Sierra Club.

Perhaps the most interesting situations are the ones where it is hard to tell where labor ends and community begins. Perhaps this is most true of worker centers—such as the multi-city Restaurant Opportunities Centers described by co-founder Saru Jayaraman and the LA Black Workers Center profiled by Yelizavetta Kofman—which fuse many characteristics associated separately with unions and community organizations. But the same is true at least to some extent of the Living Wage NYC Coalition, of the LA Food Policy Council, and of Chicago organizations like Chicago StandUp! and the Grassroots Collaborative.

Can labor and community movements learn to dance together? The evidence from this issue is that is not easy, but that such movements are finding ways to make beautiful music all over the hemisphere. P²

Food Service Workers And The Food Movement

An Emerging Partnership

Saru Jayaraman

Over the last six years, the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) has been developing and growing a consumer engagement campaign, seeking to partner with community organizations in the "good food" movement—including those seeking sustainable, locally-sourced, and organic food, to advocates for healthy food access in low-income communities, to those advocating for family farms and much more. ROC has sought these partnerships to expand the definition of sustainable food to include sustainable working conditions for food workers, and also to connect the issues faced by low-wage workers in the food system to the concerns of the good food movement.

Context: The U.S. Restaurant Industry

With over 10 million workers, the restaurant industry right now is one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the U.S. economy. 1 in 12 Americans currently works in the restaurant industry. It was one of the only segments of the economy to grow during the economic crisis of the last several years. However, the restaurant industry is also the lowest-paying employer in the U.S. 7 of the 11 lowest-paying jobs and the 2 absolute lowest-paying jobs in the U.S. are restaurant jobs. Restaurant servers are subject to the federal minimum wage for tipped workers, which has been stuck at $2.13 an hour for the last 22 years. As a result, servers use food stamps at double the rate of the rest of the U.S. workforce. 90% of restaurant workers lack paid sick days, and two-thirds report cooking, preparing and serving food while sick. Many of these challenges can be traced back to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), which has lobbied actively against minimum wage increases and paid sick days ordinances; this same lobbying group has fought actively against food regulations impacting health and obesity.

No matter how locally sourced, organic, biodynamic, vegetarian or otherwise healthy the food might be, as long as workers are too poor to be able to care for themselves and their families, or sick while cooking and serving their food the food cannot be healthy or sustainable.

Solutions: The Restaurant Opportunities Center

Over the last twelve years, the Restaurant Opportunities Center has grown into a national organization with 10,000 worker members in 32 states—almost 100 employer partners taking the "high road" to profitability and several thousand consumer members. We have won fifteen organizing campaigns against high profile restaurant companies around the country, winning $7 million dollars in stolen tips and wages, and raises, benefits, promotions, job security, grievance procedures, paid sick days, vacation pay, holiday pay and much more for thousands of workers in these companies. We have partnered with responsible restaurant owners nationwide to prove that taking the high road reduces turnover and increases productivity.

We have also opened two worker-owned restaurants called COLORS, and created a job training program

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that has helped almost 5,000 workers move up the ladder to livable wage jobs in the industry. We have published more than two dozen reports on the industry and we have won some local policy changes. We were a leading member in a coalition to raise the minimum wage for tipped workers in New York State, and we won a tip protection bill in Philadelphia, making it illegal in that city to deduct credit card processing fees from workers' tips.

However, our greatest fight over the last several years has been to raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, stuck at $2.13 an hour for twenty-two years. When the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2012 was introduced, it embraced the proposal of ROC and its allies to raise the minimum wage for tipped workers to 70% of the regular minimum wage. We had taken workers to Capitol Hill for our annual day of action on 2/13/2013, to highlight the tipped minimum wage still being stuck at $2.13, when President Obama mentioned the minimum wage in his State of the Union Address, and— for the first time in several decades—advocated for raising the tipped minimum wage in the policy brief that came out that day.

To overcome the lobbying power of the NRA and advance the legislation, we would have to build a groundswell of public support. We thought about where we had seen a groundswell of public demand in our industry—and indeed, we had seen one. With the publication of Michael Pollan's book *Omnivore's Dilemma* and Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation* and the movie *Food, Inc.*, a whole movement erupted around sustainable food—defined as locally-sourced, organic, biodynamic healthy food. Consumers learned about these things and began to demand sustainable food every time they ate out, resulting in the industry changing menu items to provide as much locally-sourced organic cuisine as they could. Only ten years prior we had heard many in the industry saying they would never be able to afford it.

We began to think not only about how we could replicate the food movement's success, but also how we could partner with this movement and help to expand the definition of sustainable food to include sustainable working conditions for the people within it. We initiated the Food Chain Workers Alliance, a new alliance of worker organizations throughout the food chain seeking to change the definition of sustainable food. We created a National Diners Guide and smartphone app, to give consumers the tools they needed to know how restaurants were faring on issues of wages, benefits and promotions and also to speak up each time they ate out. Mark Bittman, famous food writer for the New York Times, wrote about the Guide in 2012, and as a result 100,000 people visited our website to download it. One New York Times reader wrote us to say, "I'd always thought about the pigs and the cows, but I'd never thought about the people. It seems like you're on the cusp of something really big."

It certainly felt that way, but we had not yet truly reached the masses. To really replicate the success of *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *Fast Food Nation,* we wrote *Behind the Kitchen Door,* and made it a national best-seller. Danny Glover's film company, Louverture Films, worked with us to develop a series of short films based on the workers and employers profiled in the book. Most importantly, the Fair Minimum Wage Act was building momentum. We created a new consumer organization called The Welcome Table, and 100,000 people signed a petition on thewelcometable.net to demand that the minimum wage for tipped and non tipped workers be raised.

"I'd always thought about the pigs and the cows, but I'd never thought about the people."

Building with the Food Movement Locally

One of the greatest examples of successful collaboration between ROC and the food movement happened in Detroit, where a growing food movement was open to working with ROC Michigan on connecting good food and good labor.

First, a campaign against exploitation and wage theft by ROC Michigan at a local fine dining restaurant company, Andiamo, brought out many allies, including food justice organizations. 1000 people turned out for picket lines at Andiamo, including many local organizations fighting for food security for low-income communities, urban gardens, and more. In the end, ROC Michigan won a tremendous victory against

the restaurant with significant policy changes. The victory laid the groundwork for greater collaboration between local food justice organizations and ROC.

Second, ROC Michigan developed deep relationships with local "high road" employers who embraced both sustainable food sourcing and sustainable working conditions. These employers provided substantial mentorship to ROC Michigan as it prepared to develop a COLORS Restaurant of its own. ROC Michigan thus embraced concepts of sustainable food sourcing and partnership with local food justice organizations from the very inception of COLORS Detroit's development. ROC Michigan partnered with the Detroit Black Food Security Network to source items from local urban gardens. ROC Michigan's founder and director Minsu Longiaru worked with high road employer partners to identify and hire Chef Phil Jones for the restaurant, a leader in the local "good food" movement. Chef Jones went on to become the leader of the local Food Policy Council and the local Slow Food chapter. Minsu also worked with the successful founder and owner of Avalon Breads to develop a "Cooperative Business Academy" within the restaurant, in which COLORS Michigan is training and incubating low-wage worker members to start their own sustainable, cooperative food enterprises.

In many ways, the process of launching COLORS Detroit with so much partnership with the local good food movement helped to lay the groundwork for collaboration on organizing for greater systemic change locally. Together with many of these partners, ROC Michigan developed the Good Food, Good Jobs Act, a policy proposal to use the liquor licensing process to incentivize and penalize food employers, from restaurants to liquor stores selling food, based on both their employment conditions and their provision of healthy food. The policy proposal addressed both the concerns of ROC Michigan's restaurant workers, who faced poverty wages, lack of benefits and wage theft on the job, and the concerns of local food organizations who were concerned about the fact that so many Detroit residents were obtaining their groceries from liquor stores selling spoiled food. By addressing so many different needs through one policy proposal, ROC Michigan was able to build a coalition of 80 organizations together to support the bill. The coalition continues to seek its passage in Michigan.

Challenges and Lessons

Of course, partnering with the food movement has not been without challenges. One of the primary challenges for ROC, both at the national and multi-local level, has been the fact that the food "movement" is not a typical movement at all; there is no one or even several leading institutions with clearly shared goals. The food movement's diffusion has also presented challenges for projects at ROC. For example, we have searched for a national partner to add criteria around restaurants' local sourcing practices for our National Diners Guide and smartphone app, but as of yet no organization has been able or willing to partner in this way.

Nevertheless, we continue to see enormous potential for economic justice organizations and the labor movement to learn from the food movement. First, we share a common adversary with the food movement in the form of lobbying activities by large food industry trade associations. Second, as disparate as it is, the food movement has created tremendous excitement, energy and creativity among youth, people of many different classes, urban and rural residents—in general a much broader set of Americans than the economic justice movement has yet managed to reach. Some of the very same factors that make the food movement challenging to partner with—its diffuseness, its focus on individual solutions—have made it open and easy for a broad number of people to participate. It was this realization that led us to seek to partner with and replicate the food movement's success in designing a consumer engagement campaign that could help us build the groundswell we need to raise the minimum wage.

In fact, to test our theory that people in the food movement could be moved to care about workers in the food system, we conducted a national focus group with 25 self-identified foodies. These were individuals who professed going to farmers' markets or seeking locally-sourced, organic products. At the beginning of a week-long online chat-based focus group, 0 out of 25 participants said they would do anything to support food workers; after a week of education on issues affecting food workers, 15 out of 25 said they would join an organization of consumers seeking change for workers in the food system. It is this potential that continues to propel us to partner with food organizations at the national level and in multiple localities across the country. P²

Ethical Food

Can Foodies Help Promote Farmworker Justice?

Margaret Gray

In the past decade, food writers and advocates have promoted local agriculture as an alternative to the capitalist-industrial food system. Food justice has been promoted in terms of environmental protection, animal welfare and saving small farms from the auctioneer or the bulldozer—all admirable goals. But if a food ethic that values environmental, economic and social goals is to extend to all those involved in production, then it must entail active support for workers' rights. Farmworkers employed on smaller farms in local agriculture experience much the same conditions as those on industrial factory farms. Yet, the U.S. romance with small farms—fed by agrarian romanticism and contemporary food writing—have primed consumers to be sympathetic to small farmers and not their workers. A more comprehensive food ethic would require foodies and consumers to take on the cause of workers on farms large and small. What are the prospects for achieving this broader ethic—and how could public opinion be moved in that direction?

My research site is New York's Hudson Valley, just north of New York City. Between 2000 and 2010, I conducted interviews with farmworkers, farmers, statewide farmworker advocates, government employees, lobbyists, representatives from farmer organizations and a range of farmworker service providers. I also engaged in participant observation at public events related to farming and farmworker justice.

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ABOVE: Farmworkers and their allies rally in Albany for the annual Farmworker Advocacy Day. *Photo:* Rural and Migrant Ministry

The Hudson Valley epitomizes precisely those farming sectors that have benefited most from the economic stimulus promised by alternative and local food movements. New York is exceeded only by California in the market value of "local" agricultural sales. Moreover, it is distinctive for its concentration of small farms—92 percent of the state's farms are considered small-scale, with a gross income less than $250,000 a year—making it a robust case study for the local food movement.

Workers & Working Conditions

The U.S. public has not been reluctant to recognize the exploitation of immigrant farmworkers on factory farms, and food writers, most notably Eric Schlosser, have addressed their conditions. Moreover, foodies and food organizations have been involved with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' fight for a penny more for a pound of tomatoes that farmworkers pick for fast food giants. Yet, attention to the laborers in the local agricultural market has been largely absent.

The insourcing of cheap immigrant farm labor largely from Latin America, a longstanding practice in large farming states, is now widespread in smaller farming states. Until the early 1980s, the labor market of New York's farms was populated by African American and Caribbean workers. The newer workforce in the Hudson Valley is almost entirely foreign born, and 78 percent are from Latin America. More than 90 percent are neither legal residents nor citizens—71 percent are undocumented and 21 percent are guestworkers. Like their counterparts on factory farms, these workers fear possible deportation and job loss. (For guestworkers, job termination may result in being sent home and the cessation of visa privileges in the future.) Consequently, they live and work in a climate of fear, which inhib-

its their ability to complain and redress grievances. Moreover, the majority do not know their rights. Most speak little English, have low literacy levels in their native languages and have received little formal education.

In climates like New York, the work is mostly seasonal and so it cannot sustain anyone for long and affords little security. The average pay is meager. In my initial interviews, workers reported average annual incomes from farm work in the Hudson Valley of $7,345 in 2001 and $6,643 in 2002. Six years later, the workers reported earning the same or only slightly higher wage.

Field hands and packing workers described their work as arduous and dirty, requiring bending and stretching, long hours on one's feet, repetitive motions, wielding sharp tools, carrying heavy loads and working in extremes of heat, wet and cold. Beyond the strenuous nature of the labor and the scant remuneration, workers took pains to describe to me the complicated relationships they had with their employers. Their workplace was governed by paternalism and the concomitant forms of labor discipline made it difficult for them to challenge substandard conditions.

More importantly, New York's farmworkers, like those in most other states, lack the basic legal safeguards that most American workers enjoy, including overtime pay, a right to a day of rest and collective bargaining protections. This means 90-hour workweeks can be paid at straight time and, that if a few workers got together to ask for a raise, they could be fired with legal impunity.

Farmworker Advocacy

Since the 1990s, New York's Justice for Farmworkers Campaign (JFW) has advocated on behalf of workers through farmworker organizing, legal cases and a legislative campaign. Organizing agricultural workers is logistically difficult and expensive, particularly when they do not have collective bargaining protections. The strategic obstacles are intensified in states like New York, where the growing season is short, farms hire comparatively few workers and geographic dispersion hinders worker solidarity. Even when organizers can achieve consistent access to workers, convincing them to strive for change is especially challenging as the workers are unwilling to risk their livelihoods, particularly since most of them made huge sacrifices just to reach the United States. Workers explained that their bosses did not permit them to take part in organizing efforts. Organizers and farmworker service providers echoed these sentiments. Legal cases have often been successful, but lawyers and paralegals described their frustration that workers often settled a case too quickly and that lawsuits did not create structural change.

Due to these challenges, the JFW has largely pursued a legislative campaign to remove the exclusions to overtime pay, a day of rest and collective bargaining protections. Advocates focused on the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act and in the summer of 2010, after more than a decade of lobbying, the bill finally reached the floor of the New York State Senate. Despite being controlled by Democrats for the first time in decades, the state senate narrowly voted down the bill by a vote of thirty-one to twenty-eight.

The Romance of Small Farms

One main reason for the bill's failure was the lobbying efforts of the New York Farm Bureau, the state's main grower business association. The other main reason was the lack of public support. Both of these were rooted in the perception that it is the farmers in the state and not the farmworkers who are most deserving of friendly policies. Despite the vulnerability of the state's agricultural workforce and the poor conditions of their labor, deeply seated agrarian values obfuscate the position of workers.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of agrarianism not only as a formative component of national ideology, but also as a determinant in the political economy of food. The agrarian ideal encompasses three main beliefs: farmers are economically independent and self-sufficient; farming is intrinsically a natural and moral activity; and farming is the fundamental industry of society. In the lead-up to the debate about the bill in the New York State Senate, farmers appealed to the cultural cachet of agrarianism to influence the public and politicians in favor of their interests; they were quick to utilize "local" rhetoric to cast themselves as victims of the corporate industrial food system.

In addition to the farming industry, food writers have embellished the agrarian narrative about the wholesomeness of regional farms, highlighting and praising individual farmers and depicting local farms as the virtuous alternative to big agriculture. In turn, consumers are given every reason to side with, and support, the

intrepid farmers who work to bring the fruits of their labor to the public. Keep in mind that unlike Florida's tomato workers and California's factory farmworkers, the produce from the Hudson Valley (and other "local" agricultural regions) is generally not marketed to Burger King or McDonalds. And despite the fact that some of the region's apple orchards supply Walmart, Hudson Valley farmers are not the faceless corporate targets that populate corporate industrial farming. Rather, food writers encourage us to see smaller farmers as rural heroes providing bountiful farm products at farm stands, farmers' markets and restaurants.

In promoting ethical consumption and demanding a shift to sustainable and just agriculture, food writers rarely include a call for justice for farmworkers. Food advocates and their organizations display a tendency to conflate *local, alternative, sustainable* and *fair* as a compendium of virtues arrayed against the factory farm that they so vigorously demonize. This equation not only discourages close scrutiny of the labor dynamics by which small farms maintain their operations, but also lead us to believe that working conditions on smaller farms are better than on corporate-industrial farms.

Consumers and self-described foodies have not been shy about lamenting the way workers are treated in industrial agriculture. In contrast, they have told me that they think farmworkers are satistied with their jobs since they return to the farms every year. Some explain that the farm they buy from uses guest-workers as if this fact equates with better working conditions. But mostly I hear questions about what it would mean for farmers if the law changed.

What can be done?

Food advocates and consumers have several options for helping to raise the profile of workers within the alternative food movement. There is no doubt that the increase in organic farms and the humane treatment of livestock is due to consumer demand. Farmers need to hear directly from consumers that farm labor conditions matter to them. So a first step is for consumers to ask questions about the agricultural workforce that tends to their produce.

Second, some elementary research will yield reports by organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, and the Southern Poverty Law Center on the situation of U.S. farmworkers. More difficult to find is research and resources on local workers. Many states have campaigns similar to the JFW in New York with information on local agriculture. My own *Hudson Valley Farmworker Report* details the region's workforce and their working and living conditions. Other organizations such as Duke University's Student Action with Farmworkers and the D.C.-based Farmworker Justice have excellent resources. Books like *Tomatoland,* by Barry Estabrook, and *With These Hands,* by Daniel Rothenberg, both based on interviews with farmworkers, offer a wealth of insight into their predicaments.

Third, food advocates could demand attention to farmworkers in policy reports and the media. The number of publications offering coverage on food is increasing so there are many opportunities for profiling workers.

Fourth, consumers can consider farm labor policy proposals from a worker perspective. Farmers after all are more than rural heroes; they are also businesspeople with a keen interest in profit. Food activists must be willing to challenge farmers' arguments.

Finally, the more vibrant we can make regional agriculture, the more prosperous our farmers will be and, therefore, better positioned to pass on their profits to their work force. Particularly in affluent urban areas, where food dollars are plentiful, consumers can have a critical influence on building up the industry. Petitioning on behalf of workers does not need to be expressed as an attack on farmers. Instead, consumers can explain that they want their food dollars to support fair labor standards. Moreover, there has been an explosion of interest in farming by a younger generation that has developed in parallel to the expansion of the marketing of local food. This group offers an opportunity: they are experimenting with different business models, and might be convinced to put sustainable livelihoods at the center.

There are many obstacles that lie in the path of workers' inclusion in the new food ethic. Let us not imagine that the embrace of the farmworker cause by the food movement will resolve the whole range of inequities. However, this is an influential group with considerable sway over public opinion and so any amount of added scrutiny and awareness would go a long way toward promoting farmworker interests. P²

Los Angeles' Good Food Purchasing Policy

Worker, Farmer and Nutrition Advocates Meet…and Agree!

Alexa Delwiche and Joann Lo

On Food Day, October 24, 2012, the City of Los Angeles became the first institution in the country to sign the Good Food Purchasing Pledge (GFPP). Just weeks later, the Los Angeles Unified School District—which serves 650,000 meals each day and is the largest food purchaser in Los Angeles—became the second institution to sign on. While many cities and other government entities around the country have adopted food procurement policies focused on nutrition standards or preference for locally produced food, and some cities, including Los Angeles, have sweatfree purchasing policies that include food, none has an inclusive procurement policy like Los Angeles' that addresses support for the local economy, sustainable production, a valued workforce, animal welfare, and nutrition.

The development of what has been called the most comprehensive food procurement policy in the country is an example of cross-sector collaboration to advance holistic food system change. As such, LA's Good Food Purchasing Pledge may be an example for other municipalities struggling to unite the concerns of low-income communities with those of food chain workers.

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Joann Lo is the executive director of the Food Chain Workers Alliance (http://foodchainworkers.org/) and a member of the LAFPC Leadership Board.

History of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council

In September 2009, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced the creation of the Los Angeles Food Policy Task Force. The Task Force convened in November 2009 and was charged with developing a Good Food policy agenda for Los Angeles—food that is healthy, affordable, fair and sustainable. Alexa Delwiche, who was hired to coordinate the process, and Task Force members met with over 200 people, and conducted roundtable discussions and listening sessions. In July 2010, the Task Force released a report called the Good Food for All Agenda (GFAA). The Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC) was created in response to one of the recommendations of the report.

The Mayor appointed Paula Daniels, then Public Works Commissioner, to create and chair the LA Food Policy Council (LAFPC). Alexa Delwiche was hired as the coordinator and the only full time staff. A Leadership Board and staff lead an extended network of participants through working groups that focus on recommendations in the GFAA report.

Food Policy Councils (FPC) have existed for decades. They take many different shapes and serve various functions, but share a common purpose of bringing stakeholders together from across fields and sectors to examine a local food system in its entirety and develop and advocate for holistic food policies to build a more equitable, sustainable and healthy food system. Typically, FPCs have addressed "equity" in terms of disparities in healthy food access impacting low-income communities and communities of color. Many FPCs aim to connect underserved urban communities with economically marginalized small

and mid-sized farmers in neighboring food-producing regions. While the plight of farm and food workers is sometimes mentioned in FPC vision statements, few have actually developed policies or initiatives that address the rights of food workers. With LA being the epicenter of the U.S. labor movement and its reputation for progressive public policy, the LAFPC recognized it needed to address issues of food labor to be relevant locally and to build the necessary coalitions to advance truly transformative food policy. Procurement became the first opportunity for the LAFPC to incorporate food workers into an LA food policy.

Early Stages of the Good Food Purchasing Pledge

Procurement was the first recommendation addressed immediately following the Task Force's presentation to the Mayor in July 2010. Both the Chair and Coordinator saw procurement policy as pivotal to achieving the rest of the GFFA recommendations, so it was a clear first step for the City to take.

There was, and still is, growing local and national interest in food procurement from various stakeholder communities: labor, environment, animal welfare and public health organizations. This interest coincided with federal policy and administrative procurement changes occurring during the early years of the Obama Administration. Local and healthy sustainable food procurement policies were being adopted across the country. Major national food service companies, responding to consumer demands, were rapidly developing their own internal food purchasing guidelines.

By April 2011, the LAFPC Working Group "Build a Market for Good Food" decided that it would develop a model "good food" purchasing template to be made available for various purchasing institutions to adopt. Working Group members and organizations fluctuated throughout the process, but key participants were Joann Lo, Executive Director of the Food Chain Workers Alliance; Jill Overdorf, a chef from a local produce distribution company; the head of food purchasing for a major international food company; Vanessa

Photo: Haan-Fawn Chau

Farm worker harvesting strawberries in the fields

Zajfen, the Farm to School program coordinator for the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD); and, later in the process, the LA County Department of Public Health, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Compassion Over Killing, an animal welfare organization. Other participants included local farmers, processors, distributors and municipalities.

The Working Group decided to develop the template to establish a unified and operational definition of Good Food that would create clarity around differing demands being placed on food vendors as more procurement policies bubbled up across the country, and which would also provide a more coherent, operational definition for the term "good food". Specifically, the Working Group decided that its contribution to the field would be to clarify definitions for "labor" and "local" (in terms of geography and farm size) because of the diverse expertise and interests represented, as well as the lack of attention given to these issues by most, if not all, procurement policies across the country.

A few key members of the Working Group and the LAFPC Coordinator compiled and reviewed purchasing policies and bid language. From this research, they developed a skeleton draft and tasked specific experts with fleshing out details in areas related to their expertise.

There were interesting and sometimes heated exchanges among stakeholders involved in the creation of the initial draft policy as the group attempted to develop a comprehensive document that supported a sweeping set of values. Tensions between support for fair labor practices on farms and support for small, local farmers rose to the surface. One early version of the document used union farms as a proxy for fair labor practices as a tool to assist purchasers in understanding this value, since union farms provide workers with wages slightly above the industry average, healthcare benefits, seniority, a voice on the job and other benefits. The reality is that most union farms are large industrial farms, which employ thousands of workers, but don't necessarily employ strong environmental practices.

Photo: Scott Robertson

Three farm workers carrying tomato buckets overhead in fields of Immokalee, Florida

A local food distributor—and LAFPC Leadership Board member—whose mission was to connect retailers to small, local farmers, objected to the template's explicit support of industrial farms. Conversely, a food worker organizer—and LAFPC Leadership Board member—took issue with supporting small farms without strong labor protections for their workforce. The Working Group chair attempted to address this tension head on by asking for Working Group member input.

A conference call was held. It was a tense discussion, but ultimately a compromise was reached to encourage purchasers to support union farms, with a link to a list of such farms rather than a list included in the document. Similarly, purchasers would be encouraged to also support small, local farms with links to various produce distributors with local produce lines and to farmers' markets in the area. The group continued to struggle with how to develop a holistic food purchasing policy when few farms simultaneously support strong environmental sustainability, worker equity and small farmers.

Finalizing the GFPP and Adoption

By mid-January of 2012, a new draft was completed which was a significant departure from the earlier iterations. One of the most promising elements of the draft was the early development of a tiered approach, with a requirement that a baseline standard be met in each of the five value categories, so that, for example, both labor rights and a preference for smaller and local farmers must reach a certain threshold. The baseline requirement gave equal weight to the values, which was a major contribution in achieving consensus.

The Working Group decided to circulate the document to local and national experts in various fields. In March, the Working Group sent the document to over 80 stakeholders from a diversity of backgrounds: food service providers, farmers, distributors, academics, health professionals, farm and food worker advocates and labor representatives, chefs and restaurateurs, animal welfare activists, environmentalists/sustainability experts and government officials. Overall, the document received very positive feedback from reviewers, and several reviewers commented that it was the most comprehensive, far-reaching procurement document they had seen. Bob Gottlieb, a professor at Occidental College and director of the college's Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, commented, "The breakthrough of this document is that it moves beyond local and embraces a much deeper value system. This focus reflects the work and mission of LAFPC and can change the discourse nationally."

Photo: Haan-Fawn Chau

Proud chef showing off her dish for cooking contest

A June 2012 Working Group meeting stands out as one of the most important moments in our long process. The group made the strategic decision to integrate nutrition into the document rather than leave it as an appendix. Working Group members with backgrounds in fields other than nutrition—including labor, local foods and animal welfare—argued for the need to incorporate health as a fundamental principle. The group had come a long way.

Image: Anisha Hingorani

Good Food Purchasing Pledge values with definitions

The Working Group presented to the LAFPC Leadership Board in July 2012, which enthusiastically endorsed the draft document. LAFPC board member David Binkle, Director of Food Services at Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), was at the meeting and was impressed. He mentioned that school districts across the country were also interested in uniform food purchasing practices and this policy could be the model. Shortly after this meeting, Binkle approached School Board Member Nury Martinez to introduce a Good Food Procurement resolution.

From there, the Good Food Purchasing Pledge (GFPP) moved quickly. A diverse group of Working Group members and supporters presented to a committee of the LA City Council and then to the entire Council on October 24, when the Mayor issued his executive directive and the full Council approved a motion to adopt the GFPP. A few weeks later, LAUSD also adopted the GFPP. Then in the Spring of 2013, a major food service company signed the Pledge on behalf of two large corporate cafeterias in Los Angeles.

The goal of the GFPP is to harness the purchasing power of major institutions to encourage greater production of sustainably produced food, healthy eating, respect for workers' rights, humane treatment of animals and support for the local small business economy. The Good Food Purchasing Guidelines emphasize five key values: (1) **Local Economies,** (2) **Environmental Sustainability,** (3) **Valued Workforce,** (4) **Animal Welfare and** (5) **Nutrition.** Participating institutions must meet the baseline purchasing criteria described in the "Good Food Purchasing Guidelines" document. A tiered, points-based scoring system allows participants to choose which level of commitment best suits the Good Food goals of their organization. Participants are then awarded one to five stars based on their total score.

Whether the GFPP makes an impact on the five value areas and helps make Los Angeles a "Good Food" region remains to be seen, but we have high hopes. The University of Wisconsin is helping develop an evaluation system to measure its impact. Already, we have laid the groundwork here—in less than two years, our Leadership Board members, who hold positions of influence, and Working Group members, who are experts in their fields, have dramatically expanded their understanding of labor issues and broadened acceptance that the treatment of workers is a fundamental component of "good food". Local purchasers and their suppliers are beginning to understand the tools to operationalize that concept. Likewise, by agreeing to engage in the dialogue, the labor movement is beginning to play an active role in developing holistic food policy solutions that embrace good jobs, a healthy environment and a thriving community. P²

Labor and Community in Land Use Planning

The New York Hotel Trades' Council "Special Permit" Campaign

Ian Thomas MacDonald

Unions are communities at work. In North America, the historical formation and government regulation of unions have confined them to the role of representing the interests of their members as they relate to the workplace and to the "peculiar commodity" they have to sell. Labor studies has long recognized this role does not express how class is actually lived in our society; a narrow workplace focus is inadequate to reversing a long decline in labor's organizing effectiveness and bargaining power. With good reason, labor-community coalitions are presented as one of the solutions to the strategic impasse in the labor movement. From the perspective of individual unions, labor-community coalitions are often operationalized within the terms of broader sector-regulation strategies which involve working within urban coalitions to influence public decision making in directions that are consistent with union goals. As a discussion of the New York Hotel Trades Council's special permit campaign reveals, union engagement of community through the planning process can work powerfully to secure union goals while still falling short of a socially transformative urban practice.

Union Strategy in New York City's Hospitality Sector

The New York Hotel Trades Council (HTC) is the envy of hospitality unionism across the continent. In 2012, union negotiators signed a seven-year, industry-wide agreement with the Hotel Association of New York City which would see wages rise 29 percent over the length of the contract for 23,000 hotel workers. These unusually strong contract terms reflect the fact that hospitality is a highly profitable and rapidly growing industry. The union is strongly placed in this context to bargain over the distribution of hotel revenues. The employers' association has no intention of challenging the bargaining regime itself as its members derive a number of advantages from the union's ability to regulate the industry, encompassing the socialization of training and health care costs, labor control and the union's political capacity to regulate the sector in ways that align with the interests of the established hotel operators.

The union's ability to regulate the sector is premised on its ability to maintain a high level of union representation, or density. Prior to the current building cycle, which has seen the city add 24 percent to its total room stock since 2006, the union claimed a union density rate of 95 percent of the full service segment and 85 percent across all formats. But density is declining because the union is unable to organize the new supply at a rate commensurate with existing levels. As non-union operation becomes more viable in the city, the union fears that hotel operators may break from the employers' association and the union's ability to set wages and benefits in the sector will diminish.

There are three avenues available to the union for organizing new members. The contract provides for card check neutrality in properties that are opened by members of the Hotel Association or are covered by the agreement. When a unionized hotel opens another hotel, management must promise not to campaign against the union. An increasing number of new hotels opening in the city are not owned or managed

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by unionized employers, however. In these cases, the union does attempt to certify a bargaining unit through a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) supervised election. Employers strongly resist unionization and avail themselves of union suppression tactics.

The third avenue uses public policy and urban regulation to shape the development of the industry in ways that expand the unionized sector and block non-union growth. Leverage is brought to bear through land use regulation and permitting processes to prevent undesirable hotel development or to pressure hotel owners to sign card check neutrality agreements. "If the union had its druthers," an organizer explains, "it would halt all new construction. But that's not going to happen."

The union moved forward with a land use regulation strategy as it became clear in late 2008 that the hotel building boom would include many properties not covered by neutrality provisions of the contract. Union staff became experts on the city's zoning regulations, gaining an appreciation of how outdated zoning regulations were encouraging the growth of the hospitality industry in formerly manufacturing districts and how the city's 1961 zoning regulations were being revised piecemeal to track the interests of the real estate industry as the development frontier moved outward from Manhattan. Under the Bloomberg administration, the city has moved aggressively to rezone large swaths of the city's territory. Since 2006, the Department of City Planning has overseen over 100 such rezonings covering a third of the city's territory. Rezoning land use must pass through the city's Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), a concession to community planning made in the 1960s. The union uses any and all public leverage over hotel development. But ULURP is the most salient source of leverage and it has become the Archimedean point of the union's "new build" organizing strategy.

The "Special Permit" Campaign

The new build organizing strategy is currently focused on a "special permit" campaign to have language inserted into the city's zoning text that singles out hotel development specifically. A special permit is a discretionary action by the City Planning Commission to modify the existing land use or other regulations when certain findings specified in the zoning text are met. Applications for special permits must go through the full ULURP process, with final approval granted by City Council. The special permit language the union has drafted removes the "as-of-right" designation that is accorded hotels under most zoning designations. The language in the zoning text does not specify what format of hotel may be built and speaks nothing of neutrality agreements or unionization, since in the matter of regulating industrial relations local governments are preempted by federal legislation. In lobbying for special permits, the union must instead speak the language of good urban planning. Hotels are associated with a variety of noxious local effects: large numbers of tourists and visitors pack the sidewalks, deliveries are made at all hours, bars and restaurants are noisy and may crowd out local services, tall hotel spires may be out of context with the street wall, etc. At community board meetings, union members and staff also speak to the importance of union-scale wages and benefits to workers and the city's economy.

The special permit is a form of supply management. The general effect will be to discourage hotel development in areas of the city that would otherwise see rapid growth. Given the union's clout on City Council, it is unlikely that limited service hotels will be granted permits. Special permits can be used to slow the rise of a format that puts pressure on hotel revenues in the unionized sector and which is strongly opposed to unionization. In the case of full service hotels, the union will be in a better position to hold up the granting of a permit until a card check neutrality agreement has been signed with hotel developers. Expanding the use of special permits will create an infrastructure for union organizing embedded in the city's zoning text and review procedures.

The union has succeeded in securing special permit language in three re-zonings to date (Tribeca North, Hudson Square, and the Fur District), all formerly light manufacturing areas on the borders of heavy tourist areas of the city. In Tribeca North and Hudson Square, existing residents inhabiting loft conversions were generally open to the union's urban critique of new hotel development. The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) was strongly opposed, arguing that "this use of the special permit mechanism creates a disturbing precedent for the administration of the City's Zoning Resolution, where uses that are generally compatible are

channeled into an administrative review process rather than allowing them on an as-of-right basis." By contrast, the Hotel Association has called the permitting process in Tribeca North "a prudent public policy measure." The union is currently seeking to have special permits for hotels written into the Midtown East re-zoning, the last such under the Bloomberg administration which is expected to be concluded by the end of this year.

Community Engagement and Political Power

It is in the nature of new organizing strategies such as the HTC's special permit campaign that they require the union to engage communities and bolster their local political capacities. Planning interventions must meet public policy criteria beyond the workplace interests of the union, and they rely on community opposition to development as well as political influence in local government to succeed. The HTC joins labor-community coalitions that are formed on an ad-hoc basis to contest development projects and city planning initiatives like re-zonings. But there is no programmatic strategy of building integrative coalitions in which the union might find its autonomy and political maneuverability constrained.

Instead, the union mobilizes its own members as community organizers and political activists. With a total membership of 32,000, the HTC is smaller than the politically powerful teachers and hospital workers unions. Its strength lies in its ability to mobilize a very diverse membership which forms a part of class- and ethnically-based voting blocs in the city. The union encourages its members to become involved in community planning and boasts six members on community boards, including one in Midtown East. More impressively, the union has constructed a political action network which is based in the workplace alongside but separate from the shop steward system. Union organizers identify political leaders in every workplace who may be particularly involved in their local communities. In a highly centralized fashion, political strategy is defined by the leadership, staff meet with rank and file leaders, who then carry the arguments within the shops. The network is capable of mobilizing between 1,500 and 3,000 members for street actions with allies or canvassing for union-endorsed candidates. In city and local elections where rates of electoral participation are very low and winning margins are slim, electoral campaigns turn on the ability to get out the vote. Candidates that support special permits for hotel development, among other priorities, receive with the union's endorsement a sophisticated and disciplined get-out-the-vote operation.

The goal of community engagement and political power remains workplace regulation. This involves striking deals with developers which may involve supporting projects that are strongly opposed by local communities, or endorsing candidates with uneven records on policy issues of relevance to the union's membership and their communities. In the upcoming Democratic primary election for Mayor, the union endorsed Christine Quinn—the closest in the field to Bloomberg's record in office. In Midtown East, the union has formed a formal coalition with REBNY, the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce and the Building Trades Employers' Association, in which the union will lend support for a "globally competitive Midtown" in exchange for an endorsement of special permits. The community boards are opposed to the plan in its current iteration, citing a lack of public investment. For the union, "naturally we support a globally competitive business center because the hotels serve this clientele. You want world class hotels in a world class business district." If the proposal adopted by City Council later this year includes a mechanism to ensure that future hotel development will be unionized, it is likely that Midtown will continue to ensure a decent livelihood for some of those who work there.

Conclusion

Service sector unions are thinking creatively and searching for points of leverage and effective allies within the force field of urban politics. While strategies which align with the interests of politically effective coalition partners can be very powerful, a willingness to engage with community needs and organizations does not necessarily enlist unions in urban movements challenging dominant growth strategies. On the contrary, unions such as the HTC are carefully maneuvering in the terrain of urban conflict to establish forms of regulation and bridgeheads in the local state that hold out the promise of a future for organized labor in the global city. P²

Photo: Norman Oder

Construction Unions, After Years of Support for Atlantic Yards Megaproject, Finally Face Squeeze

Norman Oder

Since March 2013, a giant inflatable rat has stood on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, at a key crossroads where downtown Brooklyn edges into gentrified residential neighborhoods. The rat is outside the Barclays Center arena, which opened in September 2012. A nearby sign, indicating "Labor Dispute," proclaims, "Shame on Barclays Center Brooklyn and Forest City Ratner for hurting our community." A handout from the Carpenters Union describes developer Forest City Ratner as "Brooklyn's Notorious Tax-Chop Champ!"

The arena, clad in a pre-rusted metal skin that has drawn wows from many architecture critics but disdain from locals who liken it to a "George Foreman Grill," houses the Brooklyn Nets of the National Basketball Association and has hosted many concerts including Jay-Z, the Rolling Stones and Barbra Streisand.

Brooklyn journalist **Norman Oder** writes the Atlantic Yards Report blog (AtlanticYardsReport.com) and is working on a book about the project. He also offers walking tours of Brooklyn neighborhoods, including an Atlantic Yards tour, via his firm New York Like A Native (NYLikeANative.com).

Locals and Labor at Odds

For nearly ten years, however, such criticism did not come from labor unions. Rather, Brooklynites

LEFT
An inflatable rat outside the Barclays Center in Brooklyn signals a protest by a union that earlier supported the new arena and larger Atlantic Yards project.

near the proposed site and local civic groups fought Forest City's grand plans for Atlantic Yards: not just an arena, but 16 towers on over 22 acres, with 6,430 apartments, enabled by a state override of city zoning, infrastructure subsidies and other sweetheart deals. They slammed the tax breaks, abuse of eminent domain, a dubious "blight" designation and a failure of government oversight. Unions supported the project.

In the pro-development era that blasted off with Mayor Mike Bloomberg's election in 2001, the Atlantic Yards battle was the longest and fiercest, with lawsuits over eminent domain and environmental review. The construction unions, focused on "jobs" at a time when building in New York City has gone increasingly non-union, fiercely supported Atlantic Yards, and their members testified and cheered at rallies and public hearings.

Though construction unions still support Atlantic Yards, the Carpenters now say arena "conversion workers" have a bad deal, while some skilled trades object to Forest City's controversial, innovative plan to build the residential towers using modules pre-fabricated in a new Brooklyn factory.

Perhaps organized labor now understands the *New York Times*' capsule description in September 2012 of Bruce Ratner, Forest City's then-CEO, as having a reputation for "promising anything to get a deal, only to renegotiate relentlessly for more favorable terms."

Jobs, Housing and Hoops

The developer's mantra, when Atlantic Yards was announced in December 2003, was "Jobs, Housing, and Hoops." The jobs and housing were part of a Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) that Ratner hatched before the project was announced and was soon backed by favored groups. The plan was that Brooklyn would get the relocated New Jersey Nets. The team arrived last year, only after Ratner sold most of the team to Russian billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov.

Advocates for affordable housing, notably the New York branch of ACORN, got a deal that promised half the rental units—2,250—as "affordable," in exchange for backing the project. (Later, Ratner added 1,930 condos, upending the 50/50 "affordable" pledge.) Fewer than half the subsidized units would likely be affordable to ACORN members, complicating the claim that the project would fight gentrification. The first tower, now under construction, evades Ratner's pledge to make half the subsidized units, in floor area, suitable for families.

Ratner's promise of 10,000 office jobs was predicated on plans, quickly abandoned, for four office towers. The promised 15,000 union construction jobs—actually, 1,500 jobs a year over ten years—are in severe question, and the timetable has stretched to 25 years. The promised job training, part of the CBA, came to naught.

Still, all three prongs of the mantra were crucial to the political and editorial support Forest City received, allowing the developer to wrangle subsidies, state approval and then—with the help of "community" and labor representatives—reopen settled agreements.

The CBA, the first in New York, had eight signatories, including ACORN. Unlike in Los Angeles and elsewhere, where CBAs were negotiated by organizations that might otherwise oppose the project, the organizations in Brooklyn were Atlantic Yards supporters who met in Forest City's office to "negotiate." All received financial support from the developer. Organized labor was not involved, likely because, in New York, a union role is such large projects is a given.

The CBA included a new job-training group called BUILD (Brooklyn United for Innovative Local Development), whose leader had no experience in the field. Ratner was supposed to fund, via BUILD, a program of pre-apprenticeship training, launching locals on the path to union cards. BUILD and Forest City were rocked in November 2011, when seven of the 36 people who went through the highly competitive training program filed suit, claiming they'd been misled by promises of union jobs and ripped off by unpaid, unsafe training. That lawsuit is still pending.

BUILD closed last year, after a key official died, a former employee charged fiscal mismanagement, and Forest City decided to stop funding the organization.

The mostly white (though integrated) construction trades and the mostly black CBA representatives were not traditional allies, but they both denounced project opponents as "NIMBYs" afraid of progress. I once overheard a union official instructing arrivals on the protocol for a hearing: cheer for Atlantic Yards supporters and boo the opponents. The workers got their names checked off and left as soon as their obligation was satisfied.

Union representatives in 2009 also urged the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board to kowtow to Forest City's request to renegotiate payments for the 8.5-acre rail yard on the project site. One Atlantic Yards opponent warned that the unions themselves "will get renegotiated." Indeed, earlier that year, Forest City had halted construction at the halfway point of a tower in Lower Manhattan to play chicken with the unions, who then agreed that compromises were needed to keep people on the job.

Ratner's Modular Switch Snares Unions

In March 2011, another bombshell emerged: Forest City was planning to build the Atlantic Yards towers in a prefabricated process never before attempted above 25 stories. By assembling modules in a factory, the developer would save some 25% on construction costs, mainly labor, and launch a new business line.

Forest City portrayed modular as a win-win; the project's neighbors would experience less disruption, while the city could expect much more affordable housing. New York City officials offered praise. That win-win, however, excluded some hardhats, who questioned safety, quality and the amount of "job creation, wages and benefits." In November 2011, the *Wall Street Journal*, without raising an eyebrow, reported Ratner's rationale: "that the existing incentives for developments where half the units are priced for middle- and low-income tenants 'don't work for a high-rise building that's union built.'" Of course, that's exactly what Ratner proposed from the beginning and the state twice approved, even after the market had changed.

The first tower, a 32-story residential building was delayed, as Forest City negotiated with the unions and sought financing. "We saw without that modular construction that these projects would more than likely not go forward," said Gary LaBarbera, head of the Building and Construction Trades Council, at the groundbreaking in December 2012. "And we too in the building trades have a sense of community, and a commitment to the community and were equally concerned about affordable housing."

While ex-ACORN leader Bertha Lewis praised the project, another affordable housing advocate was critical. "By using up the available subsidies to finance smaller apartments for tenants in higher income brackets, [Forest City] is making it harder to build truly affordable units elsewhere in the City," said Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director of the Fifth Avenue Committee.

Of course, if Forest City Ratner reneged on the affordable housing it would have to pay penalties and lose development rights, so the unions had more power than LaBarbera acknowledged. He said workers in the factory would earn $55,000 a year, about 25 percent less than the average on-site union worker.

Frayed Relations Within Labor and Community

"We ultimately believe it's going to create more work opportunities," LaBarbera said of modular, in which cross-trained workers do a variety of tasks. However, some specialized unions—plumbers, electricians, steamfitters—expressed dismay at a City Council hearing in January 2013. Along with their contractor counterparts, they charged that the city bent rules to allow Forest City to prefabricate modules without the supervision of those licensed trades.

The seeming unity, based on commitment to Atlantic Yards, of labor and community had frayed. As those testifying critically were mostly older white guys, Lewis, a black woman, made scornful reference to the building trades' history of excluding people of color.

Asked about the wage difference using modular, Forest City's Bob Sanna claimed it was "probably 10 or 15% less than if the person were employed on site." That drew a heated response from a Plumbers Union rep, who said that the wages were actually 70% less than those for plumbers. Forest City's plan, he said, has "the potential to turn a very highly skilled trade that takes years of training, practice and experience into unskilled assembly work."

At the hearing, Stewart O'Brien of The Plumbing Foundation charged that the city changed the code requirement that people performing plumbing work must be in the "direct employ" of licensed firms. While the city had said it would correct that change, it never did, O'Brien recalled. "Some of our contractors said, 'Oh, yeah, Forest City Ratner reached out to us. They said, *No, no, no. We took care of that at the Department of Buildings. Only the site work has to be done by employees of licensed firms.*'"

In June 2013, the Plumbing Foundation and the Mechanical Contractors Association sued the city to reverse its approval of the modular plans, pointing to a draft—but unreleased—document that would have required licensed specialists at the modular factory. While the labor unions associated with this work did not join the suit, their leaders did sign affidavits supporting it.

Recently, a friendly TV host asked Ratner about the modular plans. "We think it has tremendous applications for a city like New York City," enthused Ratner. "Most importantly is the cost element. Work in a factory, union wages are very, very appropriate both for the worker and for our company." If Forest City must save money to make the affordable housing work, it won't pass on the savings to its market-rate tenants. "We believe if we go modular, it would be invisible to the consumer," Ratner's successor MaryAnne Gilmartin recently told investment analysts, "so it is priced accordingly."

The Rat Remains and Ratner Keeps Dealing

The rat outside the Barclays arena signals a dispute about the role of the 120 part-time workers whose job it is to convert the arena from a basketball court to a concert hall, among other functions. They earn only $14/hour, according to one report, while the arena in Manhattan, Madison Square Garden, offers some full-time positions.

Some Barclays Center workers tried to decertify their union, SEIU 32BJ, and join the New York City District Council of Carpenters, which represents the workers in Manhattan. That vote was unsuccessful, though the Carpenters have appealed to the National Labor Relations Board. The dispute briefly complicated the work of union leader LaBarbera. In February 2013, he eschewed testimony at a new hearing regarding Atlantic Yards because of the union dispute.

That hearing concerned the latest round of environmental review, a rare, court-ordered Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, based on the misleading statements by the state about the project's timetable. Forest City wants to make sure there's no state pressure—as project critics urge—for the developer to either conform to the original ten-year timetable or have the project sites bid out to other developers.

In August 2013, Forest City announced plans to offload 50 to 80 percent of Atlantic Yards by bringing in new investors. It was another reminder that, for all the promises regarding community and labor, Atlantic Yards is, of course, a business deal and Forest City is ready to reap the profits. Given that for some union leaders something is better than nothing, it's a good bet that most in the construction trades, despite some private chagrin, will be on board. P²

Contract Fights, Community Rights

Chicago Teachers and Education Justice

Beth Gutelius

The Chicago Teachers Union strike in 2012, and the intentional community-building that preceded it, present a case study of the kind of social movement unionism that critics of labor have long called for. In contrast to the way many unions have approached these partnerships, the CTU has tried to implement a form of solidarity rooted in the understanding of victory as being "bound up with" that of communities fighting for quality education. The success of the strike, both in terms of the contract teachers won and the way they mobilized broad support for education equality, illustrates the potential power of these community-labor coalitions.

On a cold, dreary day in February 2012, hundreds of teachers and community members marched silently up a residential street on Chicago's north side. Far from city hall and the corporate headquarters that often serve as targets of protest, this rally was headed to the home of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Community groups wanted to make personal for the mayor what they saw as a personal attack on the future of their children—education reforms that call for school closures and offer little opportunity for input from those affected.

Some commentators have pointed to this event as one of the more clever actions on the part of the Chicago Teachers Union. The backstory to the march reveals much about the nature of community-labor partnerships between the union and its allies. When one of these partners, the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), suggested the march on the mayor's home to protest the lack of accountability by the Board of Education and City Hall, leadership of the CTU was initially hesitant. They did not see it as a strategic target, and worried the action might backfire and sour public opinion in the middle of a contract fight that would increasingly rely on popular sentiment. Although only one of many groups in the coalition, the CTU was the organization with the most resources and largest membership. In coalition meetings, representatives of the union argued against going through with the action, but were outnumbered by the community groups in favor. In the end, the CTU risked the action in support of KOCO and other coalition groups. The march on the mayor's house has become something of a legend in Chicago—an incredibly powerful experience for participants and a game-changer in the balance of power in the fight over education, in part because the media proved sympathetic to the action.

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Why This Approach to Community-labor Coalitions (CLCs)?

In 2008, a group of teachers began to forge a reform caucus within the union membership. Those involved in the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) were dissatisfied with the leadership of the CTU and their response to the extensive education reform program implemented by City Hall. Emanuel's predecessor, Richard M. Daley, had ushered in Renaissance 2010, a flagship program to restructure Chicago's public schools, which called for the closing of "failing" schools and a significant expansion of the charter system. The strategy was

developed and partially funded by the Commercial Club of Chicago, a powerful group of corporate and civic leaders with a long history of shaping city policy. The reforms introduced would reduce the ranks of unionized public school teachers and replace them with non-union charters, while disproportionately affecting low-income students by displacing them from neighborhood institutions. Members of CORE, following the lead of community groups, framed the restructuring of Chicago Public Schools as racist—budget cuts, closings, "turnarounds" and expansion of the charter school system were having a disproportionate impact on families of color living on the south and west sides.

As Renaissance 2010 rolled out and schools were singled out for closure or "turnaround" status (when a school's staff are fired and replaced), CORE sought ways to support parents as their children's schools were shuttered. These teachers saw a promising strategy in building a broad base of power in the communities most affected by policy change, in order to combat the powerful interests that had consolidated around education reform in Chicago. Even before CORE was officially running to unseat incumbent union leadership, they held panels with community organizations across the city to strategize about how the union could work with these groups to improve the education system. When CORE stepped into the running for CTU leadership, their slate ran on a progressive platform of democratizing the union and transforming it into an organization that would fight for the broad interests of teachers and their students. To the surprise of even some CORE leaders, the caucus won the election and pivoted the Chicago Teachers Union in a new direction, rooted firmly in relationships built in communities. A symbol of this sea change was the creation of a community advisory board that met with the new CTU leadership monthly, providing feedback on the direction and strategy the union pursued.

On Strike

By the time the vast majority of the union membership —98%—voted to strike as contract negotiations reached an impasse, the union and their allies had already spent years framing the issues. Long-term relationships with grassroots groups had allowed CORE to engage with communities and develop a shared vision of "world class education" for Chicago's students, and this became the central organizing principle of the teachers' demands. Perhaps the most important meme of the strike was that teachers were striking for more than a contract—it was a fight for their students and for the fundamental right to access quality education. This resonated with the public, and particularly with Chicago public school parents. One poll reported that the teachers' decision to strike garnered the support of 66% of public school parents in the city, despite a media campaign to discredit the union and characterize teachers as selfish and irresponsible. After halting school for seven days, the teachers won considerable concessions from the school district and delegates voted to accept the terms of the contract.

Many commentators credit the commitment to rank-and-file democratic leadership for the success of the teachers' strike, and rightfully so. CORE leadership changed the formal and substantive mechanisms for member participation in running their union, under the theory that union members make the best leaders and organizers. The role of community-labor coalitions has gotten less attention as a critical foundation and is related to democratizing the union. A commitment to social movement unionism, done carefully, means deep solidarity and symbiotic relationships with partners, something CORE has taken seriously since the group's formation. As teachers began to take ownership over the direction of their union, they were simultaneously learning to see their fight as enmeshed in the larger struggle around school restructuring, and, perhaps even more importantly, that school restructuring was deeply racialized. Marching in the streets with community groups, talking to parents and students at their schools, and meeting and debating with other teachers helped shift the consciousness of members who were now actively involved in building and guiding the CTU. It was the political development of teachers themselves that encouraged greater risk-taking by the union.

Chicago's Burgeoning CLC Landscape

Chicago is not known for an overabundance of harmonious relationships between social justice organizations. Yet, in the last decade, we've seen the emergence of a number of coalitions that have proven very effec-

Community groups and teachers march silently to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's house in February 2012 to protest education reforms.

tive, and perhaps point to a new era of exchange and rapport. Two CLCs played central roles in the strike: StandUp! Chicago and the Grassroots Collaborative.

In recent accounts of the teachers' strike, organizers from the CTU have credited StandUp! Chicago with helping to prepare union members for the strike. StandUp! Chicago is a creature of three large Service Employees International Union (SEIU) locals, CTU and a range of local community groups, a coalition built on the assumption that until there was a wider social movement, organizing workers on a large scale would not be possible. StandUp! Chicago is mostly a performative coalition, staging massive gatherings to "reclaim our jobs, our homes and our schools" at targets like the Mortgage Bankers' Association annual meeting as they drank cocktails atop the Art Institute. StandUp! has drawn on emotional and cultural memes to push the boundaries of public protest. CTU organizers credit these large-scale actions, often focused on linking the financial sector to local funding crises, with helping their members to understand the political landscape and see themselves in relation to a mass movement. StandUp! Chicago represents a fairly rare allocation of resources from some of the more forward-thinking labor groups toward longer-term movement building that may yield few immediate benefits for unions themselves. Yet coalitions like StandUp!, where the commitment on the part of organizations may not be particularly deep or prolonged, prove important to framing the debate, both for participants and the wider public.

The Grassroots Collaborative, of which CTU is a member, has focused on winning local minimum wage increases and reappropriating government funds into social programs at the state and local levels. The Collaborative was originally formed during the Living Wage campaign in 1998, and has shifted form over the years, evolving from a more union-dominated group to a common-cause coalition committed to a range of issues facing low-income communities of color. The Grassroots Collaborative was instrumental in mobilizing the eleven member organizations in support of the teachers, swelling the ranks of allies.

A Year Later

Union membership voted overwhelmingly in May 2013 to re-elect CORE to head the union. The CTU, under CORE's leadership, has re-aligned its interests, putting itself in close relation to a wider social movement in Chicago. Despite this, the Board of Education and Mayor Emanuel continue to close schools and lay off teachers en masse.

An issue that remains difficult for even the most community-minded unions is how much of "communities" are represented by existing organizations, and how involved unions ought to be in helping build wider involvement in a social movement. And while the CTU retains close relationships with community partners, it has remained very focused on education issues, leaving the union somewhat distanced from other local labor struggles.

In some ways, the nature of the profession of teaching is a particular case, lending itself well to a fight like

Photo: Sarah Jane Rhee

this one, where contract demands and school reforms can dovetail. On the other hand, the teachers union had a dual problem to overcome in community-labor partnerships: not only are community groups often wary of labor unions, given the latter's track record of sincere collaboration, but there also can be a distrust of white teachers on the part of African American and Latino parents.

Conclusion

There are three aspects of the Chicago teachers' strike that are particularly relevant for a discussion of contemporary community-labor coalitions. First, the union understood that their success, on contract issues and toward a just education system, depended on the support of a broad group of parents, students, community members and teachers rooted in sincere solidarity. The strike was made possible by a community-labor coalition with a commitment to the needs and visions of different members. This included important bridge-builders with commitment to issues of racial and social justice and wide social networks from which to draw support.

Second, and related, the union used the strike to raise other, more fundamental issues about the uneven effects of education reform—what they came to call "educational apartheid"—and local funding mechanisms that divert money from social services to private developers and corporate tax breaks. This social movement unionism reflects a commitment to the process of developing a common vision of justice in collaboration with a larger movement.

The CTU and allied organizations were strategic, smart and were playing the long game. All of this said, there was a significant amount of luck that also contributed to their success. The last lesson to draw from the strike is that in order to take advantage of political opportunities, community-labor coalitions like the one CTU built provide the infrastructure to draw together the sometimes disparate threads of a social movement when it matters most. P²

In Struggle Together

Reflections on Labor-Community Alliances in the Fight for Education Justice

Peter Brogan

In recent years, teachers and their unions have come to enjoy the special privilege of being enemy number one of the billionaire-backed war to destroy public education. In the United States, this war is conducted under the guise of "reform," supposedly aimed at uplifting the most historically neglected urban populations, largely poor and racialized communities like Harlem, the south Bronx or the south side of Chicago. To the extent that the corporate-reform agenda gains sympathy from some in these communities it is because it speaks to the very real and deep problems of many urban schools. But what is actually driving the assault on public education is a desire to contain and discipline the poor, largely racialized urban sections of the working class, in tandem with the capitalist drive to expand accumulation in previously non-commodified arenas of life. Beyond this immediate economic incentive is the ideological objective of destroying the last vestiges of universal public institutions, including public education.

The turn to building a wider movement alongside community organizations has become a vital resource of hope for teachers and their unions. Yet remarkably few unions in either the US or Canada have built sustained, mutually respectful and reciprocal alliances, or what Amanda Tattersall describes in her important book, *Power in Coalition: Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change*, as "positive-sum coalitions," in which unions and community organizations help each other build their respective capacities whilst engaging in collective campaigns that achieve social change. Participating in these kinds of coalitions, Tattersall argues, can also lead to a revitalization of unions internally, "invigorating their political vision, campaign techniques, and membership engagement." This essay examines snapshots of resistance amongst education workers in Chicago, New York City and Toronto who have been working through, against and outside of their unions to develop a movement to resist the dismantling of public education and to achieve education justice in their cities. A chief element in all three cases has been sustained efforts to organize alongside community organizations, parents and other workers in their cities.

These snapshots illustrate why constructing such deep, positive-sum coalitions are necessary to effectively fight the continuous, and ever deepening, austerity urbanism that we now confront. We need to understand the strengths, limitations and problems that arise from efforts of education workers to use their unions to move beyond the institutional limitations of North American trade unionism in order to build a more effective urban movement for justice in our cities.

It is vital that we acknowledge even the best urban-based community-labor alliances are by themselves only one component of forging the kind of new working class politics that is needed to turn back neoliberalism and build cities that put the needs of people ahead of profit. Engaging in a more effective working class politics that can work across the social and geographical fragmentation of the working class requires that our organizing move far beyond any particular workplace, neighborhood, or city.

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Snapshots of Resistance

Last March when Karen Lewis, the fierce African-American veteran high school teacher and current president of the inspirational Chicago Teachers Union, spoke on a panel in New York City, organized by the Left Labor Project at the New York United Federation of Teachers (UFT) headquarters, she stated unequivocally that what has made the CTU most effective in building a movement for education justice was the alliance that they forged *with* parents and community organizations. Michael Mulgrew, the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), which represents over 200,000 workers, whole-heartedly agreed. So why is it the UFT has not succeeded in building a comparable movement for education justice?

If you were to go by the allied organizations the UFT has listed on their website, over a dozen including such important and progressive groups like Class Size Matters, Make the Road New York, it would appear as if they do embrace a similar perspective to engaging in broader struggle with community and labor allies across the city, which has been essential to the popular approach of its Chicago counterpart. Unfortunately, while we should not view the UFT as simply a business union, the union has more often served to quash internal dissent and rejected a perspective that puts members, parents or community organizations, at the center of its organizing and politics. The view of teachers' unions in Toronto, Ontario is also bleak, although teachers' material conditions are far better and the schools are performing much better than most US city school systems. Yet, unlike in New York, the teachers' unions in Toronto lack even the pretense of a social justice or organizing orientation or desire to work with community allies in coalition to fight the draconian attacks teachers have experienced this past year.

In 2012, Toronto teachers were faced with an authoritarian piece of provincial legislation (Bill 115) designed to undercut all of the ability of teacher unions to negotiate with their local school boards and impose major cutbacks and concessions on teachers. Only the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) attempted to reach out to parents and community members for support, but attempts at community outreach were minimal and fell flat. The Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation (OSSTF) on the other hand engaged in a job action (along with ETFO), withholding extracurricular activities, but barely offered any explanation of this campaign or the issues at stake in these "negotiations," angering parents rather than winning support. OSSTF seemed to count on support from the Liberal Party provincial government, but the legislation went on to become law. It was later repealed, but only after the damage was done, which one teacher described as returning a gun to the store after using it in a homicide.

Why haven't teachers unions in New York and Toronto succeeded in building robust alliances with parents and communities as in Chicago? The answers can be found in the kind of rank-and-file rebellion that has been alive in the CTU since 2008. Indeed, the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) has inspired teachers all over the US and Canada to organize in their schools, neighborhoods and cities. [See Gutelius in this issue for more detail on the Chicago case.] Under CORE's direction, the Chicago teachers have built alliances with community organizations that are more than simply coalitions as an "add-on" to the pursuit of the union's goals.

This type of organizing unfortunately stands in stark contrast with the dominant approach in US and Canadian unions, where prevailing practice is one of coalition building as narrowly focused on connecting with faith-based and community groups to support a particular organizing campaign or participating in broad-based coalitions to garner support for the union only in times of need, such as during a strike.

All too often unions have participated in coalitions as more of a cynical communications ploy, wherein they have a plethora of organizations endorsing a particular action or issue, which some have described as "letterhead coalitions."

Yet, in building this wider movement for education justice in Chicago, CORE and the CTU did not abandon more traditional, if largely neglected, modes of workplace organizing. They have shown us that when organizing to transform your union into a democratic and combative organization, as part of wider and deeper effort to construct alliances with community allies, you

need to be sensitive to the unique political and economic geography of your city. And you need to constantly be evaluating your organizing, school by school. Further, it is essential to build a movement that is fighting in a variety of ways at multiple scales. Perhaps most importantly, you need to focus as much time and energy on organizing at the workplace as you do in neighborhoods, city hall or at the state capital. Indeed, such a focus on organizing at the workplace (the school building) can be vital to organizing in your school's neighborhood and in building a power base that is more actively/organically connected to your community allies.

In New York, there are some amazing organizations of educators, such as Teachers Unite, the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE), the Grassroots Education Movement (which includes parents and other supportive individuals) and the New York Coalition of Radical Educators (NYCORE). These organizations, although small, have organized against school closings, the high stakes testing that is supplying the rational for the closings and the corporate reform agenda more generally (especially the disciplining of teachers), against the school-to-prison pipeline and for a more critical, anti-racist, democratic education.

Teachers Unite and MORE in particular, which describes itself as the "social justice caucus of the UFT," have sought to train teachers and other UFT members how to organize at their school and in their neighborhoods so as to be a more effective force in changing the union's direction while they develop strong alliances between the ability of members and teachers to fight collectively with parents and community members across the city. MORE ran a slate of stellar activist candidates for office of the UFT this past year. They failed to win any key executive positions, but recruited more members, educated their co-workers and also developed a deeper basis of support outside the UFT.

In Toronto, seeking to offer more aligned teachers' strategies, a group of rank-and-file teachers, mostly OSSTF members, created a group called Rank-and-File Education Worker of Toronto (REWT). They have been organizing with their co-workers at schools and throughout official union channels, while undertaking a series of actions (e.g. "grade ins" and rallies). This loosely formed crew of trouble-makers organized a door-to-door campaign, which consisted of two days of knocking on doors to get signatures on ETFO's petition to repeal Bill 115. Most importantly, they also used this organizing to engage in dialog and listen to people about their concerns relating to education and politics. Part of these efforts also included the distribution of a leaflet outlining how Bill 115 is part of a broader attack on workers and public services, highlighting how residents were affected and ways to join in a fight back movement. To reach as many people as possible, REWT members had the leaflet translated into Tibetan and Hungarian. REWT's efforts joined those of ETFO and OSSTF, and succeeded in getting the bill repealed. While it is not clear if REWT will continue to grow, networks of rank-and-file educators persist in organizing to both change the directions of their unions and build a movement with parents, labor and community allies.

I want to conclude by reiterating four useful lessons to be gleaned from these snapshots of resistance. First, for labor-community alliances to be effective in achieving social change, they need to be build reciprocal and respectful coalitions in which each organization can shape the direction of the organizing and help each other to develop their respective capacities. Second, the larger vision of public services—and the city more broadly– needs to be constructed *with* the public. And in reality this is a process of constructing not simply an entirely different politics but an entirely different public, one that questions authority and is driven to collective action, rather than collective cynicism. Third, organizing must be member-driven and embrace direct action. Fourth, while building community alliances we must not neglect to build rank-and-file power at the workplace. Ongoing rank-and-file organization that includes union members and community/labor allies, like the approach of CORE, MORE and REWT, is vital for ongoing union transformation and for broader movement-building. P²

Constructing Alliances to Defend Dignity!

Miners and Community Work Together in Northern Mexico

Alejandra Ancheita

Though the 1906 Cananea Copper Strike in northern Mexico was the spark that ignited the Mexican revolution, today Mexico's northern mining belt is home to union-busting and large-scale destruction of community resources for profit. But amidst a grim landscape of rapacious global extractive capitalism, there are important instances of solidarity that recall the alliance of workers, peasants, political democrats and intellectuals who carried out that revolution a century ago. The case of the Ejido La Sierrita de Galeana, a communally-owned land entity in the state of Durango, and its alliance with the mine workers of Local 309 of the National Mining Union (SNTMMSSRM), is one such shining example. The collaboration of these two groups, accompanied by the Project on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ProDESC, a Mexican NGO), has developed into a clear example of collective power created through strategic agreements between the different sectors affected by transnational companies.

The Ejido La Sierrita de Galeana, located in the municipality of Tlahuililo, Durango, covers an area of more than 6,000 hectares and is composed of 127 *ejidatarios*, or communal land owners (*Ejidos* are rural communities who hold the land in common under the provisions of Mexico's 1934 land reform). The majority of La Sierrita's population are women, children and elderly people. Due to the lack of employment opportunities and high levels of poverty in the area, working-age men have migrated to nearby cities, such as Juárez, Chihuahua and to the United States. Children's access to education in the community is insufficient and La Sierrita residents have to pay every week for a tanker truck to bring water from a nearby city, because they have neither drinking water nor a sewer system, nor do they have medical care.

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In 2004 legal representatives of the Canadian transnational mining company Excellon Resources approached the community seeking to rent four hectares (about 10 acres) of their common use land for mining purposes. The General Assembly of the Ejido approved the rental for 30 years for a total of 1.2 million pesos (approximately 100,000 USD). However, when signing the land rental contract for the four hectares as had been agreed, the *ejidatarios* noticed that the company had changed the number of hectares to be rented from 4 to 27 for the same period of time and the same quantity of money. In spite of the deceit, they decided to sign the contract due to the economic strain that most of the communal land owners and their families live with.

The resulting La Platosa Mine quickly became Excellon's most productive property. Three years later, in 2007, the company again contacted the community to offer to *purchase* another 2,700 hectares, though only offering to pay for 1,100 hectares at a price of 25,000 pesos (approximately 1,800 USD) per hectare. In light of this new proposal from the company, the *ejidatarios* of La Sierrita decided to seek legal advice from the human rights organization Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (ProDESC). ProDESC worked with the community to examine different legal and organizational strategies to counteract abuses committed by the company.

These abuses included a disinformation campaign about the supposed right of the company to expropriate the land, instilling the fear that the *ejidatarios* should sell their territory as they would lose it anyway.

After several failed attempts at dialogue, as well as social actions carried out by the community, and facing the intransigent attitude of the company, the *ejidatarios* decided to begin a nonstop peaceful protest outside the mine. The protest lasted for about three months and blocked workers from entering the mine. During this period production stopped, which motivated the company to enter into dialogue. The community requested the presence of either the president or vice-president of Excellon, and one of the two traveled to Durango to engage directly with the *ejidatarios* of La Sierrita each time discussions took place.

In 2008, after three hard weeks of negotiation, the community signed a much more favorable land contract (for rental rather than purchase), which included social, economic and environmental clauses. Important company concessions included paying 5,000 pesos/hectare, company funding of a social improvement fund with 3 million pesos to start and half a million additional pesos per year, along with a smaller scholarship fund, a swap of 27 additional hectares for company stock, hiring preferences for *ejido* residents, construction of a water treatment plant and conservation of the environment. These clauses put in place the foundations for the development of a more equitable relationship between the company and the communal landowners.

The Struggle Moves Inside the Mine

One of the most important gains in the renegotiation with the company was hiring preferences for *ejidatarios* and their children. For this reason, a large number of miners are also communal land owners. These workers identified the precarious working conditions inside the mine, and with the legal advice of ProDESC, they decided to initiate a collective process to defend their rights, now as mine workers.

Throughout the organizing process, the company did everything in its power to prevent the mine workers from coming together to form a legitimate movement capable of representing the interests of all of the workers. One of the company's main strategies in this respect was to create divisions between workers and the *ejidatarios*. This strategy involved firing *ejidatarios* who were influential in the organizing process, refusing to respect the contractual obligation to give hiring preferences to community members and openly supporting a company-controlled union. The objective was to intimidate workers into refusing to associate with the *ejidatarios* leading the organizing process, in order to continue dominating separate sectors rather than having to deal with a more powerful group of unified stakeholders. In spite of these attempts to derail the organizing process, in November 2010 the workers formed Local 309 of the National Mining Union—*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos, Sidúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana* (SNTMMSSRM, or Los Mineros for short).

One issue of workers' rights violations arose with the death of Paulín Contreras, caused by an accident during the course of his work in the mine. The company failed to report the accident as being work-related, so the widow receives a monthly pension of just 1,800 pesos (about 150 USD). On the other hand, in 2010, two workers who are children of *ejidatarios* were accused of stealing tools. Instead of filing a complaint with the local authorities, Excellon, through the manager of the mine, Pablo Gurrola, ordered for them to be interrogated on company property. Private security officials and police officers from the municipality of Mapimí carried out the interrogation, which involved striking the workers while suffocating them with plastic bags in an effort to force a confession or to make the workers accuse someone else. As the officials could not force the two to confess to the robbery, the other workers organized themselves and demanded that general management do something about the beatings. Management released a statement apologizing for the events that had taken place and recognizing that it had exceeded its authority.

Since the formation of Local 309, the company has committed a series of labor rights violations against union members. On July 5, 2012, a union recognition vote took place in the mine, and a host of irregularities occurred in spite of the presence of labor author-

ities. These included the purchase of votes, firings and the presence of thugs, and they were aimed at intimidating the mine workers who were voting.

Meanwhile, with respect to the *ejidatarios'* rights, the company has not only failed to comply with its obligations, it has actually violated the majority of the clauses in the land rental contract signed in 2008. In November 2011, after carrying out an analysis of the contract violations and breaches, the Ejido La Sierrita asked its representatives to engage in a review of the contract, including of the working conditions in the mine. The company did not respond responsibly to the request to review the contract and instead began to regularly threaten and intimidate the *ejidatarios* and the mine workers.

The *ejidatarios* are also shareholders in the company as a result of the 2008 land-for-shares exchange. In May 2012, the *ejidatarios* used their status as shareholders in the company to attend the annual shareholders' meeting in order to explain the need for the company to sit down with the *ejido* to discuss the violations of the land rental contract. As a result of the pressure exerted by the *ejidatarios*, the CEO of the company, Jeremy Wyeth, resigned his position four days after the meeting. But the issues in dispute were not resolved.

Having exhausted all attempts to resolve the dispute through dialogue owing to the company's lack of willingness to find a solution, the *ejidatarios*, through the General Assembly of the Ejido La Sierrita, decided to excercise their right to protest peacefully at the La Platosa Mine and to defend their rights associated with the autonomous control of their territory. On July 8, 2012, a nonstop peaceful protest was, once again, established in the mine entrance, where *ejidatarios* and mine workers joined together for three months to defend their dignity and land, as well as to demand their right to work.

The Struggle Goes Global

On August 20, 2012, members of the army and federal, state and municipal police arrived at the protest site claiming that they were there to carry out a labor inspection of the mine. They violently broke up the camp and entered the mine. In the face of the violence and clear violations of the rights of the *ejidatarios*, on September 8, the General Assembly decided to file a lawsuit to revoke the land rental contract. This seeks to bring to an end the 2008 agreement for the rental of 1,100 hectares.

In light of the company's violent response, ProDESC, the Ejido La Sierrita de Galeana, Local 309 of the National Mining Union, the Canadian Labor Congress, United Steelworkers and MiningWatch Canada filed a complaint with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The complaint alleges that Excellon committed human rights violations in the workplace as well as of the *ejidatarios*' rights to land and natural resources. On the same day the complaint was presented, representatives of the *ejido* and Local 309 met with members of the Canadian Parliament to inform the Canadian Government about the arbitrary actions being carried out by Excellon in Mexico.

Throughout this process, the mine workers affiliated with the National Mining Union have maintained a strategic alliance with the *ejidatarios* of La Sierrita. This is due to the fact that both sectors came to realize during the organizing process that the supposed antagonism created by the company between the landowners and the mine workers is a myth that weakens mutual defense and collective power in the face of opposition from transnational companies. In the case of La Sierrita, this opposition seeks not only the overexploitation of the *ejidatarios'* land, but also of the workers, who are the very same *ejidatarios,* and their children.

Excellon is currently facing agrarian and labor law lawsuits for numerous human rights violations, including the rights to a healthy environment, self-determination, freedom of association and collective bargaining. The *ejidatarios* and workers remain staunch allies because, organized collectively, they know they will win and achieve *la victoria siempre*! P²

Uniendo lo que el Capital Divide

Labor-community unite in an unequal Northern Greater Buenos Aires

Rodolfo Elbert

Rodolfo Elbert, originally from Chaco, Argentina, currently lives in Buenos Aires. The paper is based on his Ph.D. dissertation in Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Fieldwork was supported by the NSF-DDRIG, the WAGE initiative, and Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program, UW-Madison. A detailed analysis of union activism in the plant described here can be found in "Activismo sindical y territorio en un periodo de reactivación de la protesta gremial en la Argentina", *Revista Quid 16, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani,* 2012. Elbert is currently a CONICET-funded Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) and teaches Sociology at UBA.

There is an ongoing debate among scholars and activists about the possibilities of organized labor as a force of resistance to increasing social inequality: is the labor movement capable of leading the struggles for social justice in a globalized world? In order to understand labor's prospects it is important to study strategies that unions develop to include groups that have been historically marginalized from the labor movement. In Latin America, the question is whether or not unions are developing relations of solidarity with organizations of informal workers, because the typical country in the region employs 70% of the labor force informally.

In Argentina, informality affected an average of 48% of the employed labor force between 2004 and 2010. Given high levels of informality and the low intensity of activism in the recent past, it seemed unlikely that a militant labor movement could emerge. However, labor revitalization did happen after 2003, and unions are again the main organizers of social protests. The combination of labor revitalization and persistent informality provides an ideal setting to ask if there are union strategies beyond the workplace that establish relations of solidarity between formal and informal workers.

This article presents evidence of a successful alliance between formal workers employed in a meatpacking plant and residents of adjacent neighborhoods in Northern Gran (Greater) Buenos Aires. After describing the solidarity actions, I identify the characteristics of this case that help to explain the alliance, based on a comparison with strategies of unions in nearby factories. Preliminary evidence suggests that the existence of a grassroots democratic union is a necessary condition for inclusive union strategies. The scale of relations varies according to the geographical pattern of workers' housing.

The Factory and the Neighborhoods

This paper uses evidence from interviews and participant observation focusing on relations between formal and informal workers in a city in Northern Gran Buenos Aires. The city is located in the Province of Buenos Aires, around 40 kilometers north to the city of Buenos Aires. The focus of the study is a portion of one city that

includes the meatpacking plant and two adjacent neighborhoods. The majority of neighborhood residents are part of a broadly defined working class, with a high proportion of unemployed and informal workers. Because of the combination of high informality among residents and the new labor activism in the factories, this location provides a good scenario to study changing relations between formal and informal workers during labor revitalization.

The meat packing plant employs 700 workers, being one of the biggest employers in the Argentinean meat industry. The factory regime is a variation of what Burawoy calls "localistic despotism", characterized by the imposition rather than the negotiation of production policies. It is localistic because most workers are recruited in the adjacent neighborhoods. Recruitment happens through the political networks of the ruling Peronist party and social networks linking workers with lower management.

A corrupt shop floor union has been a key element of despotic localism in the past. The hegemony of the corrupted union ended in 2008, when a grassroots group won the union election. This group is part of a broader movement for union democracy in Argentina, which has been defined as *Sindicalismo de base* (grassroots unionism). In the plant, the grassroots group includes workers with past experience of activism in the union movement and the left as well workers with no activist experience. Since the grassroots group is in office, there has been an increasing activism based on democratic decision making processes during labor conflicts.

Within the workplace, the grassroots group challenged the company's nonstandard work arrangements and despotic policies. Beyond the workplace, it challenged the clientelistic networks through actions of solidarity with neighborhood organizations. In the pages below I analyze two of these campaigns.

Labor Solidarity to Community Activism

The union involvement in a land occupation demanding social housing provides a good example of workers' solidarity with the struggles of neighborhood residents. In 2010, a group of residents occupied a public lot in one of the adjacent neighborhoods. One of the persons that was at the center of the occupation was Martin (a pseudonym), a union activist from the plant who was also a long-time resident.

On multiple occasions the occupiers raised demands during the meetings of the district's board, and Martin was the leading voice of the group. On one occasion, he confronted the neighborhood's peronist boss who was vice president of the board. As he recalled in an interview:

> ". . . I knew her from the *barrio* and from the meatpacking plant. At some point in the meeting she said 'I have helped a lot of people to get a job in the meatpacking plant.' So I replied '. . . don't be shameless. How many people have you helped?' And she said: 'A lot. More than 100.' So I told her, 'Yes, you help them, but for how long can they keep their jobs? You help them in, but after two months they are jobless again. You never helped anyone. I have worked in the meatpacking plant for a long time.' I don't mind telling them the truth. When I got to the board I said 'I'm a union representative at the meatpacking plant.' And I also told her once, 'If you want to talk to the company's manager about me, just do it. I'm not afraid of you or him . . .'"

Thus Martin emphasized his identity as union representative and occupier, confronting the party boss on both fronts.

Other union activists and workers provided sustained support to the occupiers. During the occupation, their actions of solidarity included participating in the weekly distribution of flyers, providing meat for the meals and helping with fundraising efforts. They were present during key events, such as resistance to a police expulsion threat on day 5, a road blockade the day after the expulsion and various public demonstrations.

Union activists explained to me why they got involved in the land occupation. Most workers live in the neighborhoods that surround the plant, but also many of the neighborhood residents currently work (or have worked) in the meatpacking plant. In addition, the meatpackers' solidarity is the

result of the political orientation of the grassroots union, which aims to unite neighbors and workers. They support the occupation because they think it is a fair demand, but also because in the future this might win them the neighbors' support to their workplace struggles.

After the workers' meeting with the mayor, public officials said that "these workers are citizens of our district" and journalists pointed out that "this conflict affects so many families because many workers actually live in our district." The meatpackers succeeded in their strategy of taking the labor conflict outside the workplace and into the community.

Community Involvement in Workplace Struggles

I could also see relations of solidarity linking the union and the local community during workplace conflicts. One instance of this solidarity was present during a labor conflict in 2011, after the company laid off a group of subcontracted workers.

The struggle started with a week-long strike and blockade of the plant. Workers organized intermittent blockades of adjacent avenues, two blockades of a highway, one demonstration in the city and a music festival. During most of these actions, workers relied on the solidarity of different unions from the area, but also from neighbors and neighborhood organizations. For example, during the music festival, there were two *cumbia* bands formed by young neighbors, and members of the neighborhood's *bachilleratos populares* (adult education centers) helped collecting food and money for the striking workers.

When entering the public arena, workers portrayed themselves as both workers and neighbors.

> "They should pay more attention to us. This conflict affects the 600 families of the workers. But it also affects all the *barrios* that surround the meatpacking plant. That's because at least half of those who live in these *barrios* are currently working for the Frigorifico, or have at some point worked here. And they all know the awful working conditions and the hyper exploitation that has been going on in this plant for more than 40 years. We finally stood up against these conditions, and we won't surrender until we win . . ."
>
> *TV interview of union activist*

Workers also communicated about their conflict through a one-page flyer distributed in the nearby neighborhoods and during large public events. The flyer had an important impact in the district and won the workers a meeting with the mayor. After the meeting, public officials said that "these workers are citizens of our district" and journalists pointed out that "this conflict affects so many families because many workers actually live in our district." Although the mayor didn't provide any help to the workers, the meeting itself is evidence that the meatpackers succeeded in their strategy of taking the labor conflict outside the workplace and into the community.

In the subsequent weeks, the meatpackers forced the company to re-hire part of the laid-off workers and all workers got a payment that the company owed them. During this conflict, meatpackers combined actions of protest within the workplace with an effort to take the conflict into the community.

This effort was based on their self-presentation as both workers and neighbors and in the different strategies to communicate their problems to community residents. The geographical focus of their actions was the nearby neighborhoods, where most workers live.

Case	Workforce Housing Pattern	Organizational logic of union	Type/scale of strategy
Meatpacking plant	Concentration	Democratic	Inclusive/Local
Food processing	Dispersion	Democratic	Inclusive/ Regional
Car manufacturer	Dispersion	Bureaucratic	Exclusive/—

Conclusion

Many authors suggest that the possibility of a new labor upsurge that confronts capital's offensive depends once again on the alliances that labor movements establish to broaden their constituency. In Argentina, meatpackers' grassroots strategies show how organized labor can successfully join broader popular sectors in the struggle for social change. What are the conditions that explain the success of this inclusive union strategy?

My research compares the meatpackers' strategies with those of workers in two factories located nearby. The comparison has allowed the identification of variables that explain variation in the orientation and outcome of strategies:

In this three-way comparison, the emergence of grassroots democratic unions appears as a necessary condition for inclusive strategies. However, the scale of the strategies depends on the geographical distribution of workers' housing. In the meatpacking plant, the activism focused on the nearby neighborhoods because most of the workers live there. The grassroots union of the food processing plant, on the other hand, oriented the alliance-building efforts to broader Northern Gran Buenos Aires because of workers' residential dispersion. These cases indicate that, even in an unfavorable environment of degraded work and corrupt unions, militant *sindicalismo de base* can build power and forge successful alliances with working class communities. P²

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